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RCB top the table after bowlers help thump LSG

STADIUM 11

Can Sara Arjun Silence Trolls Once More With Dhanush?



BOX -OFFICE 12



PM Modi Calls for 9-Point Pledge on Health, Environment and Self-Reliance

Mandya: Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Wednesday urged citizens to adopt a nine-point pledge focusing on water conservation, cleanliness, tree plantation, Swadeshi promotion, domestic tourism, natural farming, healthy diets, reduced oil use, fitness, and social service. Speaking at Adichunchanagiri Mutt after inaugurating a temple in Mandya district, he also stressed sustainable agriculture and healthier lifestyles.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2 >

SHORT TAKES



Lokesh Named TDP National Working President

Nara Lokesh has been appointed as the national working president of the Telugu Desam Party (TDP). The party also announced new organisational structures, including its politburo, national, and state committees. Palla Srinivasa Rao was named state president, while B. Shabari became the first female national general secretary. Lokesh, son of Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu and grandson of N. T. Rama Rao, takes on a key leadership role as the party undergoes a major restructuring.

AMARAVATI

3 Days.. 3 Bills.. One Flashpoint

Parliament Braces for the Delimitation Storm

NEW DELHI, APR 15

India's Parliament gears up for a rare three-day special session from April 16-18, where explosive bills could super-size the Lok Sabha, redraw electoral maps, and finally unlock 33% women's reservation.

At the heart: the Constitution (131st

Amendment) Bill, 2026, fast-tracking the Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam, 2023. It targets women's quotas in Lok Sabha and state assemblies by the 2029 polls—a "landmark for gender parity," per Union Law Minister Arjun Ram Meghwal.

Paired with it: the Delimitation Bill, 2026. This redraws constituencies us-

ing fresh population data, potentially ballooning Lok Sabha seats to 816 or beyond. Frozen since the 1971 Census, the freeze ends post-2026 census, the government says, to fix "demographic distortions" from migration and urban boom. A top official called it a dual push for "reform and representation," linking women's seats—even in SC/ST quotas—to the new boundaries.

Opposition Fires Back Hard

But fury brews. Congress's Jairam Ramesh slammed it as "deliberate deceit," warning southern states' clout could shrink. "What happened to uniform expansion? This upends federal balance and mocks Ambedkar's legacy," he thundered.

Trinamool's Derek O'Brien went nuclear: "Women's quota is just pretext for a devious delimitation plot. They're trivializing Parliament and empowerment."

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2 >



Telangana SEEEPC survey, IEWG analysis SCs/STs three times more backward than others



HYDERABAD APRIL 15

A detailed caste backwardness index (CBI) compiled from the Social, Educational, Employment and Political Caste Survey (SEEEPC) has highlighted sharp disparities across social groups in Telangana. The analysis shows that Scheduled Castes (SCs) and Scheduled Tribes (STs) are three times more backward than the General Castes, while Backward Classes (BCs) are 2.7 times more backward.

Transport Minister Ponnam Prabhakar, Animal Husbandry and Sports Minister Vakati Srihari, TPCC chief

Mahesh Kumar Goud, Chief Secretary K. Ramakrishna Rao and others announced that the SEEEPC survey report along with the findings of the Independent Expert Working Group had been available in the public domain from Wednesday night.

According to the survey report, the total BC population in the State stood at 56.36%, followed by SCs (17.42%), STs (10.43%) and Other Castes (15.79%). Interestingly, as many as 14 lakh people (4%) preferred no caste column. The survey covered 1.12 crore families in the State out of the total population of 3.55 crore. The IEWG, in its key find-

ings, has noted that the State's weighted average CBI score stands at 81. Of the 242 castes surveyed, 135 fall below this benchmark, accounting for 67% of the population. These include 69 BCs, 41 SCs and 25 STs. In contrast, all 18 castes in the General category, representing 12% of the population, rank well above the State average. The report observed that "every backward caste is not equally backward." Among the 107 castes deemed less backward than the State average, there are 64 BCs, 18 SCs, seven STs and all 18 General Castes.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2 >



Work at double speed: Bihar CM Samrat

Hours after taking oath, Bihar's new Chief Minister lays down a tough five-point governance plan, signalling urgency on corruption, delivery and development, even as political reactions pour in from across the spectrum.

HOME LAND 07

Hyderabad to become global tourism hub under new state policy: Jupally

HYDERABAD, APRIL 15

The State government is committed to transforming Hyderabad's iconic heritage sites into world-class tourist destinations, Minister for Tourism and Culture Jupally Krishna Rao said. Accompanied by Charminar MLA Mir Zulfeqar Ali, Tourism Development Corporation Managing Director Gautami, and Director of Archaeology Arjuna Rao, the Minister on Wednesday conducted a comprehensive inspection of the Chowmahalla



Palace and the Charminar precinct, including its surrounding historical structures.

Highlighting the government's conservation efforts, Krishna Rao announced that

the Quli Qutb Shah Urban Development Authority (QSDA) has sanctioned Rs 3.64 crore for the restoration of the historic 'Machli Kaman'.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2 >

Alleti blasts Revanth for misleading public on women's quota and delimitation



HYDERABAD, APRIL 15

BJP Legislature Party Leader Alleti Maheswar Reddy has sharply criticised Telangana Chief Minister Revanth Reddy, accusing him of misleading the public and fostering misunderstandings about constituency delimitation and women's reservations in the country. He expressed his strong disapproval of Revanth Reddy's claim that the Congress party was solely responsible for providing the Constitution, calling it a significant insult to Dr. B.R. Ambedkar.

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TG on Heatwave Alert; Next 3 Days Crucial

Hyderabad: Parts of Telangana are reeling under intense heatwave conditions, with temperatures crossing 43°C in several districts. The India Meteorological Department (IMD) has warned that the mercury is likely to rise further by 1°C to 2°C over the next three days, making the situation critical.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2 >

KTR reaffirms support for women's reservation, opposes linking it with delimitation

HYDERABAD, APRIL 15

Bharat Rashtra Samithi working president K. T. Rama Rao has made it unequivocally clear that the party has consistently supported the Women's Reservation Bill and has a proven track record of implementing women's empowerment measures during its tenure in government.

Speaking to the media on Wednesday, KT Rama Rao stated that under the leadership of K. Chandrashekar Rao, the BRS government not only supported the Women's Res-



ervation Bill but also passed resolutions in both the Legislative Assembly and Legislative Council. Furthermore, the government implemented 50% reservation for women in local bodies and ensured one-third reservation for women in market committees, demonstrating its unwavering commitment to women's empowerment, he reminded.

However, KT Rama Rao strongly objected to the unnecessary linkage being made between women's reservation, delimitation, and constitutional amendments. He questioned

why the union government is complicating a straightforward issue.

"Implement women's reservation immediately. There are 543 seats in Parliament apply it there. In Telangana, there are 119 Assembly seats implement it here as well. Why create confusion by linking it to seat increases and delimitation?" he asked. KTR clarified that as per constitutional procedure, the sequence must be followed properly first the census, then delimitation, and only thereafter any structural changes.

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THIS IS A MATTER OF PRIDE FOR INDIAN WOMEN

Aakula Vijaya, Former BJP Mahila Morcha President

- If Modi is there, anything is possible.
- Women's reservation is now not just a slogan but a reality.
- This is a true example of Nari Shakti, not mere mercy or charity.
- Today's women are tomorrow's lawmakers
- The decision of the Modi government is historic

HYDERABAD

For decades, women's reservation in legislatures has remained only a slogan. However, due to the strong determination of the country's beloved Prime Minister Narendra Modi, it is now becoming a reality, said Aakula Vijaya, former State President of BJP Mahila Morcha.



She said that the name of Narendra Modi will be written in golden letters in history. Indian women have already proven their capability to govern the country through figures like Jhansi Lakshmi Bai, Rani Rudrama, and Ahilyabai Holkar. She stated that many political parties have used women's reservation only as a slogan for decades without sincere implementation.

Women do not mean only a few families; granting 33% reservation in legislatures is a remarkable achievement, she said. She appreciated the conduct of a special three-day Parliament session to pass and implement the "Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam" bill. She also expressed gratitude on behalf of women for Prime Minister Modi's determination to ensure women's reservation in the 2029 elections.

A Helmet Might Have Saved Him: Young Designer Dies in Balanagar Crash

A 28-year-old pillion rider died and another youth was injured after two motorcycles collided late at night on the IDPL-Jagadgirigutta road, once again underlining the deadly cost of riding without helmets.

Samudrala Kiran, Correspondent

MEDCHAL-MALKAJGIRI

In a tragic late-night road accident that has left a family shattered and renewed concerns over two-wheeler safety, a 28-year-old interior designer lost his life after a head-on collision between two motorcycles in Balanagar on Monday night. The accident, which occurred on the busy IDPL-Jagadgirigutta road, is being seen as yet another painful reminder that a helmet is not just a precaution—it is often the only barrier between life and death.

The deceased has been identified as Mudgula Prashant, a resident of Devamabasthi. Prashant was travelling as a pillion rider on a motorcycle being ridden by his friend, Munigala Tharak, 23, when the crash took place around 11:30 p.m. near Nizam Hotel at BJR Nagar. According to the Balanagar police, the two were heading towards Jagadgirigutta when their motorcycle collided head-on with another bike coming from the opposite direction. The other vehicle was reportedly being ridden by a man identified as Rajesh Babu.

Police said the force of the collision was severe. Prashant was flung into the air and suffered a critical head injury after landing on the road. Tharak also sustained injuries to his head and hands. The violent impact left bystanders stunned, and local residents quickly rushed to help. Both victims were shifted to BBR Hospital, but despite efforts to save him,



doctors declared Prashant brought dead on arrival. What makes the incident even more heartbreaking is that police confirmed neither Prashant nor Tharak was wearing a helmet at the time of the crash. Investigators believe the absence of head protection significantly worsened the outcome of the accident. In many such cases, medical experts and traffic officials have repeatedly stressed that even when collisions cannot be avoided, helmets often prevent fatal head trauma and give victims a far greater chance of survival.

For Prashant's family, however, that warning has now come too late. A young man with a profession, aspirations, and years of life ahead of him was lost in an instant. What should have been an ordinary journey home ended in a tragedy that has left loved ones confronting an unbearable void. Road accidents are often reported as numbers and incidents, but behind every case is a family whose life changes forever—parents waiting for a son who will never return, siblings grappling with shock, and friends haunted by the final moments of a ride that began routinely and ended fatally.

Following the accident, police shifted Prashant's body to Gandhi Hospital for post-

mortem examination. Based on a complaint lodged by his sister, Nandini, the Balanagar police have registered a case of negligent driving. Officials have launched an investigation to determine the exact circumstances of the collision, including the speed of the vehicles and whether any traffic violations contributed to the crash.

Balanagar Circle Inspector Narsimha Raju once again appealed to two-wheeler riders and pillion passengers to place safety above convenience. He stressed that many such deaths are preventable when riders follow basic precautions such as wearing helmets, controlling speed, maintaining lane discipline, and remaining alert—especially during late-night travel, when visibility is reduced and the risks on the road are often greater.

This accident is more than a local crime or traffic report. It is a deeply human tragedy and a public safety warning. On roads crowded with fast-moving vehicles, one careless moment, one missing helmet, or one reckless decision can destroy multiple lives. Too often, riders treat helmets as optional for short trips, nighttime rides, or familiar routes. But tragedy does not announce itself in advance, and accidents do not spare those who think they are only a few minutes from home.

Prashant's death should not fade into just another headline. It should stand as a wake-up call to every rider and every pillion passenger: wear a helmet, no matter how short the distance; do not overspeed; and do not assume that experience alone can protect you. Rules of the road are not inconveniences—they are safeguards written in the memory of lives already lost. If one lesson emerges from this heartbreaking incident in Balanagar, it is this: a helmet may seem small in the moment, but its absence can leave behind a loss too large for any family to bear.



HP epitomises natural beauty, rich cultural and spiritual heritage: Governor

HYDERABAD

Himachal Pradesh epitomises natural beauty and a rich cultural and spiritual heritage, Governor Shiv Pratap Shukla said. The Governor was addressing a gathering at Lok Bhavan here during the Himachal Pradesh Statehood Day celebrations held as part of the Ek Bharat Shreshtha Bharat initiative on Wednesday. A large number of people from Himachal Pradesh participated in the event.

"After serving as Governor in the Himachal Pradesh, I recently assumed charge as Governor of Telangana. Himachal Pradesh is renowned across the country for its breathtaking natural beauty, rich cultural heritage, and traditions of valour," Governor Shiv Pratap Shukla said.

He noted that Himachal, popularly known as Devbhoomi, stood as a symbol of spirituality, peace, and harmony, and continued to inspire.

The State's diverse folk culture, traditional festivals, and folk dances further strengthened India's cultural glory, he added.

The Governor lauded the hardworking and humble people of Himachal Pradesh for playing a key role in the State's progress and development. He said the State had good roads, power supply, and abundant water. With its consistent advancements in education, health, and sustainable development, Himachal Pradesh stood as a model for the country, he said. "The spirit of Ek Bharat Shreshtha Bharat inspires us to understand and respect the traditions of different States. Celebrations such as these foster unity, integrity, and mutual cooperation," Governor Shiv Pratap Shukla said. He called upon everyone to contribute their part to make India stronger, more prosperous, and self-reliant. Cultural performances organised on the occasion captivated the audience. (NSS)

Vivek announces major push for overseas jobs via TOMCOM

HYDERABAD,

Minister for Labour and Mines Dr. G. Vivek Venkatswamy said the government is committed to creating extensive overseas employment opportunities for the youth of the state. He stated that the Telangana Overseas Manpower Company (TOMCOM) is facilitating international job placements for young people.

The Minister revealed that Germany has an annual requirement of nearly 5 lakh jobs, and in this context, the country has come forward to issue around 90,000 visas every year. "Through Advanced Technology Centres (ATCs) in Telangana, skill development training is being provided to 25,000 youth annually. The state government is spending nearly ₹4,000 crore for this initiative. The TOMCOM is offering German language training within a period of four months," he said. Addressing the media in Chennai on Wednesday, the Minister said the Indian youth enjoy a strong reputation abroad for respecting laws and working diligently. He also highlighted

that job opportunities in Germany offer salaries exceeding ₹2 lakh per month. The Minister said the Congress government is moving forward to fulfill its promise of providing two lakh jobs, and credited Chief Minister A. Revanth Reddy for already facilitating over one lakh job opportunities.

Vivek Venkatswamy urged local unemployed youth to make the best use of the opportunities being provided by TOMCOM. He also stated that the Telangana Gig Workers Act has emerged as a model for the country.

"Chalo Warangal on Medical College Issues : Medico Parents Association"

The Medico Parents Association has called for a "Chalo Warangal" protest over issues in Telangana medical colleges.

HYDERABAD

State President of the Medico Parents Association, Malloji Satyanarayana Chari, released a press statement today urging parents from all medical colleges across Telangana to participate in the protest program at Kaloji

Narayana Rao Health University (KNRUHS) in Warangal, demanding immediate resolution of issues in both government and private medical colleges.

He highlighted that private medical colleges are charging excessive fees, especially in B and C categories. According to government regulations, fees should be collected only for 4.5 years, but colleges are collecting for 5 years.

As a result, students admitted under C category are being charged an additional ₹12 lakhs, while B category

students are paying ₹6 lakhs extra. In total, private medical colleges are allegedly collecting an excess amount of ₹209 crores in violation of norms.

Protesting against this exploitation by private medical colleges, the Medico Parents Association has called for a protest (gherao) of KNRUHS. He also mentioned that a complaint was filed last week with the Telangana Fee Regulatory Committee Chairman regarding these irregularities.

Additionally, as per government

norms, all students—regardless of category—should pay only ₹60,000 as university fees. However, managements in private colleges are charging extra amounts ranging from ₹1,20,000 to ₹1,50,000 arbitrarily. In protest against these practices, the Medico Parents Association has given the call for Chalo Warangal.

They appealed to medical parents to gather in large numbers at KNRUHS, Warangal, on Friday the 17th of this month at 10:00 AM and make the protest a success.

CONTINUATION FROM PAGE 1

KTR reaffirms support for women's reservation, opposes linking It with delimitation

FROM PAGE 1

He asserted that BRS would support any reasonable proposal that does not harm the interests of southern states, but warned that any attempt to disadvantage South India would be strongly opposed, including through protests if necessary.

Launching a sharp attack on Telangana Chief Minister A. Revanth Reddy, KT Rama Rao described him as a Hybrid Chief Minister, alleging inconsistency in his political stance.

"In the morning, he represents Congress, by evening he aligns with BJP. Naturally, such a hybrid approach reflects in governance as well," KTR remarked.

He further criticised the Chief Minister for double standards, pointing out that while procedures are being demanded from others, the same were ignored when proposing the division of Hyderabad into three corporations without consulting GHMC representatives, ZPTC members, or MLAs. "You cannot have one policy for yourself and another for others. As a national party, Congress must speak with clarity and responsibility instead of making contradictory statements," he added.

Alleti blasts Revanth for misleading public on women's quota and delimitation

FROM PAGE 1

The BJP leader highlighted that the Constitution's Preamble states, "We, the people... do hereby adopt, enact and give to ourselves this Constitution," arguing that Revanth Reddy is spreading inaccuracies by asserting that his party is the only one responsible for the Constitution.

He further mocked the Chief Minister for lacking a fundamental understanding of the delimitation process, which is a constitutional exercise carried out every decade based on census data, as stipulated in Articles 82 and 170. He clarified that during the delimitation process, the President of India appoints a Delimitation Commission with the Election Commission's consultation, which typically includes members like a former Supreme Court judge and the Chief Election Commissioner. The BJP leader called on the national leadership of the Congress party to clarify their stance, questioning the silence



of prominent leaders such as Rahul Gandhi, Sonia Gandhi, Priyanka Gandhi, and Mallikarjun Kharge on the matter. He rejected the "Hybrid Policy" or "GSDP Model" proposed by Revanth Reddy, stating that it lacks constitutional validity.

In a sarcastic tone, he suggested that GSDP actually refers to "Gandhi's Delimitation Procedure" in this context. Maheshwar Reddy also criticised Revanth Reddy's new narrative advocating for a higher allocation of seats to regions that contribute more in taxes, describing it as fundamentally flawed. He raised concerns that if this

approach were implemented statewide, it could lead to fewer seats in economically backward districts like Adilabad and Mahabubnagar, while increasing seats in areas surrounding Hyderabad.

He questioned whether this represents a strategy to marginalise poorer communities. The BJP leader characterised the entire situation as a "political charade" orchestrated by Revanth Reddy to advance his own national political ambitions, implying that he is striving for Mallikarjun Kharge's position and seeking favor with the Gandhi family.

TG on Heatwave Alert; Next 3 Days Crucial

FROM PAGE 1

An Orange Alert has been issued for multiple regions, including Hyderabad and Medchal-Malkajgiri, as well as districts such as Adilabad, Nizamabad, Khammam, Mahabubnagar, and Medak, where maximum temperatures are expected to range between 41°C and 44°C. Heatwave conditions are likely to prevail in Adilabad, Nizamabad, Khammam, Narayanpet, and Jogulamba Gadwal districts.

For Thursday, the IMD has issued a Yellow Alert for Adilabad, Nagarkurnool, Wanaparthy, Narayanpet, and Jogulamba Gadwal, indicating a continued risk of high temperatures and heatwave conditions.

Officials have advised residents to take necessary precautions, including avoiding outdoor activities during peak hours between 12 noon and 4 pm, staying well-hydrated, and wearing light, breathable clothing to prevent heat-related illnesses. Authorities have urged people, especially children, the elderly, and those working outdoors, to remain vigilant as the heatwave is expected to persist over the coming days.

3 Days.. 3 Bills.. One Flashpoint

FROM PAGE 1

Southern states, with tighter population controls, fear losing seats to northern giants—a classic regional rift in delimitation's toxic history.

Three-Line Whips, Tense Floor Show
With whips out for full attendance, expect fireworks amid state polls. The Delimitation Commission will handle boundaries and quotas, insists the Centre, staying "within constitutional rails."

Economic Ripple Effects Mount

FROM PAGE 1

Beyond politics, experts flag fiscal bombshells: Expanding to 850 seats could hike annual Parliament costs from ₹4,500 crore to ₹7,000 crore, per PRS Legislative Research estimates. Southern CMs like Tamil Nadu's MK Stalin warn of "punishing progress"—their states contribute 31% of GDP but hold just 19% seats now.

Women's Groups Split, Public Buzzes
Women's reservation wins cautious cheers from outfits like SEWA, but delays irk: Original 2023 bill needed delimitation anyway. Social media erupts—#NariShakti trends with 5 lakh posts, mixing feminist hope and #SaveFederalism rage. Polls show 68% back quotas, but 55% fear north-south skew (CVoter). Will this expand democracy or ignite federal feud? The House decides.

SCs/STs three times more backward than others

FROM PAGE 1

On population share, 99% of STs, 97% of SCs and 71% of BCs are more backward than the State average.

Disparities are evident in education, employment and living conditions. Nearly half of SCs in the workforce are daily wage labourers compared to 10% among General Castes. Thirty per cent of private sector professionals are from General Castes, while only 5% are STs. Access to private schooling is enjoyed by one-third of General Caste

children but less than 10% of SC and ST children. One-third of ST families live without toilets or tap water, compared to 5% of General households.

Even within groups, inequities persist. Among BCs, 75% of youth in Goldsmith and Padmasali castes are English-medium educated, compared to less than 30% in Mudiraj or Valmiki castes.

Land ownership varies widely among SCs, while dropout rates differ sharply between Gond and Lambadi tribes. Interestingly, 14 lakh people

identified as "casteless" in the survey. Their CBI scores place them among the least backward, with better access to education and services than most groups. The committee emphasised that the CBI is not intended to recommend caste categorisation but to provide empirical evidence of backwardness. It concluded that while the CBI is one framework, it underscores the need for nuanced policies that address the hierarchy of backwardness across castes lines, rather than treating social groups as monolithic categories.

Hyderabad to become global tourism hub under new state policy: Jupally

FROM PAGE 1

He stated that the tender process would be initiated shortly to ensure the timely commencement of works. The Minister also directed officials to take up the renovation of the 'Sher-e-Batil' Kaman and instructed the beautification of the fountain near Charminar to enhance its aesthetic appeal for visitors.

The Minister noted that the development of tourism hubs across the State is being streamlined under the New Tourism Policy. By adopting a Public-Private Partnership (PPP) model for infrastructure develop-

ment, the government aims to maximise revenue while simultaneously creating sustainable employment opportunities for local communities, he said.

Reiterating the government's focus on the city's heritage, Krishna Rao said special master plans are being drafted to position Hyderabad as a premier destination on the global tourism map. He emphasised that the administration is striking a balance between preserving the architectural integrity of heritage wealth, such as the Chowmahalla Palace, and providing modern amenities to cater to the influx of domestic and international tourists.

“South Central Railway Celebrates the 135th Birth Anniversary of Dr. B.R. Ambedkar in a Grand Manner”

“Practicing professional integrity and courage is the greatest tribute to the legacy of Bharat Ratna Dr. B.R. Ambedkar” – South Central Railway General Manager Shri Sanjay Kumar Srivastava

HYDERABAD

Under the aegis of South Central Railway, the 135th birth anniversary celebrations of Bharat Ratna Babasaheb Dr. B.R. Ambedkar were held grandly on April 15, 2026, at the Rail Nilayam Auditorium in Secunderabad.

The event was attended by South Central Railway General Manager Shri Sanjay Kumar Srivastava as the Chief Guest, while Additional General Manager Shri Satyaprakash and Principal Chief Personnel Officer Shri Siddharth Kati attended as Guests of Honour.

Heads of various departments, other senior officers, staff members,



representatives of SC, ST, OBC associations, and recognized trade unions also participated and paid tributes to Dr. B.R. Ambedkar.

On this occasion, the General Manager Shri Sanjay Kumar Srivastava addressed the gathering and highlighted the enduring legacy of Dr. B.R. Ambedkar. He stated that Ambedkar's vision not only shaped the Constitution but also influenced nation-building through education, social reforms, and infrastructure development.

He recalled Ambedkar's key role in the Damodar Valley Project and in the comprehensive river development policy of 1943, which integrated multi-modal transport, irrigation, flood control, and power generation.

Reflecting on the direction of the nation, he emphasized that Ambedkar's ideals of inclusiveness, integrity, and visionary development continue to guide India's progress, especially in strengthening transport and railway infrastructure, which are pillars of

modern nation-building. He further stated, “Demonstrating professional integrity and courage is the finest tribute we can pay to Bharat Ratna Dr. B.R. Ambedkar.”

As part of the celebrations, prizes were distributed by the General Manager to winners of an essay writing competition organized by the Personnel Department of South Central Railway on the topic “Architect of Social Justice in India.”

Earlier, representatives of SC/ST and OBC associations and trade union leaders of South Central Railway shared their views on the achievements, services, and legacy of Dr. B.R. Ambedkar.

On this occasion, the Secunderabad Division and the office of the Chief Workshop Manager (CWM) at Lallaguda also celebrated the 135th birth anniversary of Bharat Ratna Dr. B.R. Ambedkar with great respect and enthusiasm. Senior officers, trade unions, and association representatives participated in these events.

Jupally chanced upon UK tourist at Chowmahalla Palace

HYDERABAD

Minister for Tourism and Culture Jupally Krishna Rao during a visit to the historic Chowmahalla Palace on Wednesday, chanced upon a visitor from the United Kingdom.

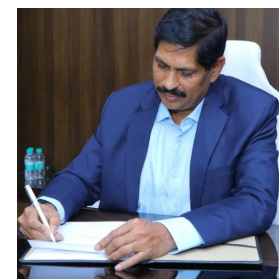
The Minister, who was at the palace to oversee its maintenance, engaged in an impromptu conversation with the foreign national to gather first-hand feedback on the city's tourism landscape.

During the interaction, Krishna Rao enquired about the visitor's itinerary to which the tourist shared that he had already visited the iconic Qutb Shahi Tombs. The Minister further enquired whether the visitor was enjoying the famed Hyderabad hospitality and culinary experience. Seeking to ensure a smooth stay for international guests, Krishna Rao also solicited views on the amenities provided at various heritage sites. This spontaneous exchange underscores the Ministry's proactive approach to enhancing the experience of global travelers in the State.

Suresh Battini, IRS Assumes Charge as Principal Chief Commissioner of Income Tax for Andhra Pradesh & Telangana

HYDERABAD

Shri Suresh Battini, a 1991-batch Indian Revenue Service (IRS) officer, has assumed charge as the Principal Chief Commissioner of Income Tax for Andhra Pradesh and Telangana today. He brings extensive experience in key areas such as corporate and business assessments, financial investigations, tax deduction at source (TDS), and international taxation, along with strong administrative expertise in human resources, finance, information technology, and business analysis. Prior to this appointment, he served as the Chief Commissioner of Income Tax, Hyderabad, from September 2024 to April 2026, where he led the Income Tax administration for Andhra Pradesh. With his new role, Shri Suresh Battini will now oversee Income Tax administration across both Telugu states—Andhra Pradesh and Telangana.



SOUTHERN RAILWAY

No. M-TRD-29-IOT-2026-27-04 Dt. 13.04.2026
For and on behalf of the President of India, the Divisional Railway Manager/Traction Distribution Branch, Chennai Division, Southern, Railway, Chennai-3, invites online tender from the experienced Contractors for the following works for further details, please refer to www.ireps.gov.in

Sl. No.	Tender No./Name of the work	Value(Rs.)	Closing date/time
1.	Modification to existing OHE arrangements due to Realignment of curves for increasing speed to 130 kmph in Chennai Division.	56060845.60	04.05.2026 (15.00 hrs.)

Sr.Divisional Electrical Engineer/
Divisional Railway Manager, Traction Distribution, Chennai - 3

SOUTHERN RAILWAY

CHENNAI DIVISION-MECHANICAL BRANCH (ENHM WING)
GEM Bid No. GEM/2026/B/7431472 dated: 13.04.2026

Divisional Railway Manager/Mechanical Branch/EnHM Wing/Chennai Division, Southern Railway Chennai 600003, for and on behalf of President of India invites ONLINE Tenders for the following work as per Gem Bid document given in the e-tender portal www.gem.gov.in The tenderer(s)/bidders intending to apply for e-tender for outsourcing of “Mechanized cleaning at Tambaram Railway Station on Manpower basis for 1461 Days and Tambaram Colony on outcome basis for 1253 Days” in Chennai Division, need to get enrolled in the e-tender through portal www.gem.gov.in and only online tenders will be accepted. The cost of EMD can also be paid through online in Gem portal as per bid document.

Description	Mechanized cleaning at Tambaram Railway Station on Manpower basis for 1461 Days and Tambaram Colony on outcome basis for 1253 Days
Location	Tambaram Railway station and Tambaram colony
Tender value	Rs.21,37,06,967.48
Earnest Money Deposit	Rs.12,18,530/-
Period of completion	04 Years

Tender closing date and time: 04.05.2026 17:00 Hrs.
The details of tender value, EMD value are given in e-portal www.gem.gov.in for details bid submission, please refer to web portal www.gem.gov.in

Assistant Environment & Housekeeping Manager,
For Divisional Railway Manager/ Mechanical-EnHM wing
Chennai Division, Southern Railway - 600003

Osmania University Commences TG-SET 2025 Certificate Verification

HYDERABAD

Osmania University has officially commenced the certificate verification process for candidates who successfully qualified in the Telangana State Eligibility Test (TG-SET) 2025. The proceedings began today at the TG-SET Office, marking a final step in the certification of the state's next generation of academic professionals.

Vice-Chancellor's Visit and Commendation
The Honorable Vice-Chancellor of Osmania University, Prof.

Kumar Molugaram, visited the TG-SET headquarters today to personally oversee the operations. During his visit, he interacted with the candidates, extending his heartfelt congratulations on their achievement.

Prof. Molugaram lauded the rigorous standards of the examination, stating: “The successful conduct of TG-SET 2025 is a testament to our commitment to academic excellence. I commend the Member Secretary and the entire TG-SET team for their meticulous planning and professionalism in ensuring a transparent and seamless process.”

Verification Timeline and Logistics
The university has implemented a streamlined system to handle the verification for all

29 subjects. Key details include:

Completion Deadline: All verification rounds are scheduled to conclude by April 19, 2026.

Candidate Facilities: Comprehensive arrangements have been made at the TG-SET Office to ensure a smooth, efficient, and candidate-friendly experience.

Looking Ahead: TG-SET 2026
In a move that will surely spark enthusiasm among aspiring educators, the Vice-Chancellor announced that the official notification for TG-SET 2026 is slated for release in May 2026. This early announcement provides prospective candidates with ample time to begin their preparations for the upcoming cycle.

SPORTS AUTHORITY OF INDIA
GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
DEPARTMENT OF SPORTS
(An Autonomous Body under Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports)
Jawahar Lal Nehru Stadium Complex (East Gate-No. 10), Lodhi Road, New Delhi-110003

APPLICATIONS FOR APPOINTMENT OF ASSISTANT COACH IN SPORTS AUTHORITY OF INDIA ON REGULAR BASIS

Sports Authority of India (SAI), an autonomous organization under Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports, invites applications from eligible candidates for filling up **323 posts of Assistant Coach (Pay Band of Rs. 9300-34800+ GP Rs. 4200)** in 26 disciplines (namely Athletics, Archery, Badminton, Basketball, Boxing, Canoeing & Kayaking, Cycling, Fencing, Football, Gymnastics, Handball, Hockey, Judo, Kabaddi, Kho-Kho, Lawn Tennis, Rowing, Shooting, Swimming, Sepaktakraw, Table Tennis, Taekwondo, Volleyball, Weightlifting, Wrestling and Wushu)

- The detailed notification including eligibility criteria etc. are available on the website of SAI (www.sportsauthorityofindia.nic.in)
- Opening date for online registration of application is **23.03.2026 (10:00 AM)**
- The last date of submission of online application is **21.04.2026 (05:00 PM)**

Cbc 47103/12/0003/2627 ED-HRD, SAI

A Hindu Maha Sammelan was held at Defence Colony, Neredmet, Hyderabad



HYDERABAD

Padma Shri awardee Dr. Garikapati Narasimha Rao attended as the Chief Guest and delivered a speech on Hindu culture. Shri Bharteepoodi Srinivas, RSS Secunderabad Division In-charge, attended as the Special Guest, and Smt. Navata attended as the Guest of Honour. They spoke about the greatness and pride of the nation.

Smt. Garikapati Sharda, BJP leader Shri Katikela Sudhakar, RSS Neredmet Physical Head Shri G. Ravi, City Karyavah Shri Uduva Jagadeesh, and Defence Colony Youth President Shri Madhu were among those who organized the event.

Advocate Smt. Prasanna, Shri Satish, Smt. Pankaja Srinivas, Shri Subrahmanyam, and BJP National Council Member Smt. Geeta Murthy also participated in the program.

At the beginning, Smt. Navata stated that if the family system remains strong, the nation will prosper. RSS Secunderabad leader Shri Bharteepoodi Srinivas, in his speech, said that India is a country that follows culture and traditions and serves as an inspiration to other nations.

Finally, Padma Shri Dr. Garikapati Narasimha Rao addressed the gathering. He expressed concern that stu-

dents are committing suicide due to fear after failing intermediate exams and said this should not happen. He emphasized that such incidents can be avoided if parents maintain a friendly relationship with their children.

He also suggested that people should utilize solar energy, which helps in environmental protection. He called for the practice of rising above caste divisions and identifying as Hindus beyond household boundaries. He stated that a party with Hindutva ideology is currently ruling the country. He encouraged people to stay connected to Swadeshi values, native language, and the motherland.

He thanked the RSS organization for the opportunity to participate in such a Hindu Sammelan as part of its centenary celebrations. The gathering was attended by thousands of women, youth, elders, and colony residents, making it highly crowded. Before the meeting began, children like Baby Keerthi and Baby Shruti received appreciation from the audience for their classical dance performances. The event was successfully conducted under the supervision of organizers including Neredmet leader Shri Katikela Sudhakar, Defence Colony Youth Club President Shri Madhu, Shri Subrahmanyam, and others.

SOUTH CENTRAL RAILWAY
Follow us on www.scr.indianrailways.gov.in
Details of the Tender Notices of S.C Railway can be seen on our website : www.ireps.gov.in

Tender Notice No. B-E29-TRD-TNDR-02-2026-27 dt:10.04.2026

For and on behalf of President of India, the undersigned invites e-Tenders for the following work.

Tender No.: B-E29-TRD-TNDR-02/2026-27 **Name of the Work:** Conversion of Tramway type OHE to conventional type OHE in view of reliability improvement in BZA Division **Approx. value (₹):** 6,99,25,313.06 **Bid Security (EMD) (₹):** 13,98,500.00/- **Completion period:** 12 Months **Date of closing:** 06.05.2026 **Cost of Tender form (₹):** Nil

For full details and conditions visit our site at www.ireps.gov.in

N.B. If date of opening happens to be a holiday, the tender will be opened on next working day.

Sr.Divisional Electrical Engineer, TRD, Vijayawada

Tender Notice No. GRIE.29/11/214, Dt:11.04.2026

E-Tenders from the Contractors who are having valid 'B' grade electrical contractor's license are invited.

On behalf of the President of India, Electrical Branch of the Chief Workshop Manager, South Central Railway, Wagon Workshop, Guntupalli-521 241 invites sealed tenders for the following work up to 14:45 hrs. on 11.05.2026.

Tender No.: GR/E.29/11/214 Dt:11.04.2026 **Description:** Improvements to electrical assets. Provision of 2No. 20KWp Solar energy plants for shunya, shunya+service buildings, online monitoring system for 350Nos. smart energy meters and conversion of OH lines to lines to UG cables at WWS/GTPL **Quantity:** 01 **Period of Completion:** 12 Months **Tender Value (₹):** 1,36,52,303.60/- (Rupees one crores thirty six Lakhs fifty two Thousand three hundred and three point six zero paise only). **Bid Security/Earnest Money to be deposited (₹):** 2,73,100/- (Rupees two lakh seventy three thousand one hundred only). **Cost of Tender document (₹):** Free of Cost **Offer Validity:** 60 Days from the date of opening **Type of tender:** Works **Tender governed by:** IRGCC-2022 **System of Tendering:** Open Tender - Single Packet **Similar nature of work:** Applicable **Time & Date of Bid closing:** 15-00 Hrs. of Dt. 11.05.2026 **Time of Bid opening:** 15-15 Hrs. of Dt. 11.05.2026 **Tender document and Corrigendum:** Visit website <http://www.ireps.gov.in> for tender document and changes/corrigenda if any. If the date of opening declared as holiday, the tenders will be opened on the next working day at same timings.

Chief Workshop Manager, WWS, Guntupalli

e-Tender Notice Nos. C/E.29/ Elec/M/SC/01/PA/OT/2026-27 Dt.13.04.2026

For and on behalf of President of India, the undersigned invites e-tender for the given below work up to 15.00 hours on 05.05.2026

S.No.: 01 **e-Tender No.:** etender No.C/E.29/Elec/M/SC/01/PA/OT/2026-27 **etender No.**E-M-SC-01-OT-2026-27 **Name of work:** Secunderabad Division Electrical Maintenance Department - (i) Bhadrachalam road - Development of crowd control measures and additional holding area at BDCR during Godavari Pushkarams - 2027 (ii) Bhadrachalam road - Improvements to water supply arrangements Provision of main & 2nd entry B.Os, PF shelters, vehicle parking area etc. at BDCR (iii) Bhadrachalam road - Infrastructure development works at BDCR in view of Godavari Pushkarams - 2027 - Electrical arrangements. **Tender Value (₹):** 6,20,88,629.90 **EMD (₹):** 12,41,800.00 **CTF (₹):** 0.00 **Completion period:** 6 Months

- Tender conditions/other particulars are available in the Tender documents on IREPS website at www.ireps.gov.in which can be downloaded, can be participated and can view any modifications if any.
- The tender notice is also displayed in the Notice Board located in the office of Sr.DEE(Maintenance), Secunderabad Division, South Central Railway, Secunderabad which can be seen on all working days.
- The Railway reserves the right to cancel the tender without assigning any reason thereto.

Sr.Divisional Electrical Engineer (M)/Secunderabad

No.NW/148/WIII/Tender notice/ 2026-27 Date: 13.04.2026

Sr. Divisional Engineer, Coordination Nanded, South Central Railway invites E-Tenders on behalf of the President of India for the following works.

S.No.: 01 **Tender No.:** T-202627-3-002 **Authority:** Co- ord **Description of the work:** Cess repairs/widening work under ADE/PAW's jurisdiction. (IRPSM ID no. 11.04.31.24.4.53.001) **Tender value in (₹):** 24105600.00 **Earnest money in (₹):** 482200.00 **Completion period:** Nine Months **Cost of tender form in (₹):** 0

S.No.: 02 **Tender No.:** T-202627-3-003 **Authority:** Co- ord **Description of the work:** Cess repairs/widening work under ADE/N's jurisdiction. (IRPSM ID No.11.04.31.24.4.53.002) **Tender value in (₹):** 16572600.00 **Earnest money in (₹):** 331500.00 **Completion period:** Nine Months **Cost of tender form in (₹):** 0

S.No.: 03 **Tender No.:** T-202627-3-004 **Authority:** Co- ord **Description of the work:** Cess repairs/widening work under ADE/PAU's jurisdiction. (IRPSM ID 11.04.31.24.4.53.004) **Tender value in (₹):** 24708240.00 **Earnest money in (₹):** 494200.00 **Completion period:** Nine Months **Cost of tender form in (₹):** 0

S.No.: 04 **Tender No.:** T-202627-3-005 **Authority:** Co- ord **Description of the work:** Supply of Teams of Artisan and Khalasi (Mason, Carpenter, painter, plumber and non skilled) as required all over Nanded Division for a period of 02 Year(under Sr.DEN/West/NED jurisdiction). **Tender value in (₹):** 21762451.80 **Earnest money in (₹):** 435300.00 **Completion period:** Twenty Four Months **Cost of tender form in (₹):** 0

S.No.: 05 **Tender No.:** T-202627-3-006 **Authority:** Co- ord **Description of the work:** Hingoli-Proposal for additional loop line of CSL-750m for Goods handling at Hingoli station in Purna-Akola section. (IRPSM ID 11.04.16.25.3.53.001) **Tender value in (₹):** 21755218.33 **Earnest money in (₹):** 435200.00 **Completion period:** Six Months **Cost of tender form in (₹):** 0

SL No.: 01 **Tender No.:** T-202627-3-002 **Similar nature of work (for costing above 50 lakhs):** Any Civil Engineering work excluding Zonal works.

SL No.: 02 **Tender No.:** T-202627-3-003 **Similar nature of work (for costing above 50 lakhs):** Any Civil Engineering work excluding Zonal works.

SL No.: 03 **Tender No.:** T-202627-3-004 **Similar nature of work (for costing above 50 lakhs):** Any Civil Engineering work excluding Zonal works.

SL No.: 04 **Tender No.:** T-202627-3-005 **Similar nature of work (for costing above 50 lakhs):** Any Civil Engineering Work (including zonal works)/Manpower Supplies.

SL No.: 05 **Tender No.:** T-202627-3-006 **Similar nature of work (for costing above 50 lakhs):** Any Railway track work including track maintenance work.

All above tenders will be closed 08.05.2026 at 15:00 Hrs.

A060 Sr.DEN/Co-ord/Nanded

For further tender conditions / details and for downloading the tender documents, Please visit website at <https://www.ireps.gov.in> or www.scr.indianrailways.gov.in

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SHORT TAKES

Senior Congress leader Mohammed Javid dies in road accident

Khammam District Congress Committee President Nuthi Satyanarayana Goud expressed deep shock



KHAMMAM: Khammam City Congress Committee former president and PCC member Mohammed Javid passed away in a tragic road accident that occurred on Wednesday on the outskirts of Pillalamarri in Suryapet district. Upon learning of this, Khammam District Congress Committee President Nuthi Satyanarayana Goud expressed profound grief. In a statement, he recalled that as a minority leader and a committed member of the Congress party, they had worked together for many years and organized numerous party activities. He said that losing such a good person is deeply painful and that he has lost someone very close to him. "This death has left an irreparable loss not only to the Congress party but also to me personally," he said with sorrow. He extended his heartfelt condolences to the bereaved family, prayed that they be given the strength to endure this immense loss, and wished for the departed soul to rest in peace.

Kavitha slams Congress over 'Forceful Land Grab', backs farmers in Vikarabad protest

- Do not snatch the livelihood of innocent farmers
- Farmers in deep crisis, Congress governance worse than BRS - Kavitha
- Police detained Kavitha and Visharadhan and transported them to Bantaram Police Station
- Media personnel who went for coverage were manhandled, and their cameras were snatched by the police

VIKARABAD

Kalkavuntla Kavitha, President of Telangana Jagruti, along with Dharma Samaj Party President Visharadhan, led a massive protest in Vikarabad in front of the RDO office. The protest was organized against the Congress government's move to acquire land from small and marginal farmers for the proposed Parigi Industrial Corridor.

Kavitha said that the injustice being done by the Congress party to farmers is so grave that it cannot be undone, even if the party is reduced to ashes. She strongly criticized the Congress government, alleging that under the guise of industrial development, it is depriving vulnerable farmers of their livelihoods. She described the party's actions as unjust and warned that such policies would eventually lead to public rejection. She further alleged that in villages such as Kallapur, Rapole, and Bhatla Chandaram, agricultural lands are being acquired extensively, leaving farmers in distress. According to her, the protest aimed to bring the farmers' plight to the attention of the entire state.

Highlighting the scale of land acquisition, Kavitha stated that out of the proposed 1,250 acres, nearly 1,000 acres are assigned lands, while the remaining 250 acres belong to



farmers from SC, ST, and BC communities. She accused the government of targeting marginalized farmers while sparing large landowners.

Criticizing the Congress party's three-year governance, she said farmers continue to struggle with unresolved issues such as Rythu Bharosa, loan waivers, urea shortages, and lack of Minimum Support Price (MSP). She also questioned the government's stance on environmental concerns, pointing out the contradiction between plans to clean the Musi River and proposals to establish polluting industries nearby.

"From the Frying Pan into the Fire"

Kavitha expressed deep concern over the deteriorating condition of farmers in the state, stating that the situation has worsened significantly. She alleged that the Congress government's performance has been even more detrimental than that of the previous BRS administration.

According to her, instead of addressing issues involving large landholders, the government is disproportionately targeting SC, ST, and BC farmers. She further stated that despite farmers' clear unwillingness to part with their lands, efforts are being made to ac-

quire them forcibly. Reaffirming her stance, Kavitha asserted that injustice against farmers would not be tolerated under any circumstances. She emphasized that Telangana Jagruti and the Dharma Samaj Party would stand firmly with farmers wherever such issues arise. She also announced that a new regional political party would be launched in Telangana within the next ten days, with plans to intensify public movements following its formation.

No clear assurance from the collector

Kavitha raised serious concerns with the District Collector regarding the plight of farmers affected by land acquisition for the Parigi Industrial Corridor. Although the Collector personally called her requesting that the protest be withdrawn, she refused, insisting that the administration must directly engage with the affected farmers.

She reiterated that most of the lands targeted belong to SC, ST, and BC farmers, who are unwilling to surrender them. Kavitha criticized the administration for ignoring their concerns and proceeding without proper consultation.

She made it clear that the protest would continue unless the Collector

personally visited the villages, interacted with farmers, and addressed their grievances transparently. However, the Collector did not provide a concrete assurance, merely stating that he would "speak to the RDO," which Kavitha described as inadequate. As a result, Kavitha and Visharadhan continued and intensified the protest, reflecting growing distrust in the government's handling of the issue.

Police Overreaction

Tensions escalated during the protest as police allegedly resorted to high-handed measures, attempting to forcibly detain Kavitha and Visharadhan. This led to a scuffle at the protest site. Both leaders condemned the police action and raised slogans against the government. Reports also indicated that journalists and protesting farmers were treated roughly, with cameras being seized and media personnel pushed aside.

Allegations against the Central Government

Kavitha also issued a strong warning to the BJP-led Central Government over the proposed delimitation of Lok Sabha constituencies. She alleged that using population as the sole criterion for representation is a deliberate attempt to weaken southern states.

She argued that states like Telangana, which have demonstrated progress in population control and economic development, should not be penalized by reduced political representation.

Kavitha pointed out that Telangana's current representation in Parliament, at 3.13%, is already limited and should be increased rather than curtailed. She cautioned that such measures could undermine democratic principles and lead to serious consequences.



Vigilance Key to Preventing Fire Accidents: Additional DGP Mahesh M. Bhagwat

HYDERABAD

Additional Director General of Police (Law & Order) Mahesh M. Bhagwat emphasized that constant vigilance is essential to prevent fire accidents, noting that even minor negligence can lead to serious consequences.

He was addressing an awareness programme organized by Fire Department officials at the DGP Office on Wednesday, as part of the Fire Week celebrations.

ADGP Mahesh M Bhagwat highlighted that timely and calm response during fire emergencies can significantly reduce loss of life and property. He advised that in the event of a fire, the Fire Control Room should be alerted immediately by dialing 101, and occupants must evacuate the building without delay. He stressed that lifts should never be

used during fire emergencies and that staircases are the safest option for evacuation.

He further explained that in case of heavy smoke, individuals should stay low and crawl along the ground to avoid suffocation, and cover their nose and mouth with a wet cloth while moving to a safe location. In situations where the ground is too hot, he advised people to "stop, drop, and roll" instead of running, to extinguish the flames effectively. He also underscored the importance of basic fire safety awareness among citizens, particularly in schools, hospitals, and multi-storey buildings. On the occasion, Fire Department officials demonstrated essential safety measures and precautions to be followed during emergencies. IGP (P&L) Gajiroo Bhupal, RFO Harichandra Reddy, DFO Venkanna, and other officials attended the programme.

Niranjan accuses Congress govt of ignoring Palamuru projects

HYDERABAD

Former Minister S. Niranjan Reddy has criticised the Congress government for ignoring essential irrigation initiatives in the Palamuru area. He cautioned that there would be heightened protests if prompt action is not taken to rectify the situation. The BRS leader insisted that the government must ensure that the reservoirs related to the Palamuru projects are filled ahead of the forthcoming monsoon season.

During a press conference at Telangana Bhavan on Wednesday, Niranjan Reddy stated that the BRS plans to finalise its action plan by the first week of May and will initiate protests, including padayatras, to pressure the government. "We will reveal those accountable for the delays and bring this matter to the public's attention," he asserted. Niranjan Reddy emphasised the urgency of completing outstanding tasks associated with the Palamuru-Rangareddy Lift Irrigation

Scheme and ensuring a consistent water supply through the Kalwakurthy Lift Irrigation project. Additionally, he called for the retraction of the proposed Gollapalli reservoir, claiming that the government has disregarded public opposition.

The former minister noted that Palamuru, once a thriving area, has descended into drought, migration, and poverty since the establishment of Andhra Pradesh. He pointed out that the BRS government had started to reverse this decline after 2014 by investing significantly in irrigation and development. However, he alleged that the current Congress government's lack of action is pushing farmers back into hardship. He questioned the absence of review meetings for the Palamuru projects, especially considering the Chief Minister's connection to the region.

Niranjan Reddy also criticised both the State and Central governments for their failure to obtain necessary approvals and resolve interstate disputes concerning the project.

Massive Scooty Rally in Telangana Heralds Women's Empowerment

HYDERABAD

In a vibrant display of support for women's empowerment and the landmark 33 per cent reservation policy, a massive scooty rally was organized by women which was organized by BJP Mahila Morcha and Yuva Morcha in the city here.

BJP state president N Ramchander Rao flagged off the rally at Keshav Memorial at Narayanguda in which hundreds of women and youth took to the streets, cheering for the central government's initiatives under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

Addressing the gathering, Rao said support for 'Nari Shakti Vandana Adhiniyam' With the 33 per cent reservation for women in electoral bodies set to become a reality by the 2029 Lok Sabha and Assembly elections. He further stated that the upcoming special Parliament sessions from April 16 to 18 would host crucial discussions on the Nari Shakti Vandana Adhiniyam. He said



that women across the nation are expressing their gratitude to PM Modi for this historic step.

Exposing political delays committed by Congress for the bill, BJP state chief reminded the public that the issue of legislative reservations for women had been languishing for over 30 years. "During the UPA regime, the Congress party failed to move forward with this bill due to internal pressures and a lack of political will. It was only under PM Mo-

di's leadership that all parties were brought to a consensus to pass this historic act," he pointed out.

Rao launched a vitriolic attack on Telangana Chief Minister Revanth Reddy and the I.N.D.I. alliance accusing them of conspiring to stall the implementation of the women reservation bill. He accused Revanth Reddy of attempting to divide the country along the lines of religion, caste, and region for narrow political gains.

GITAM to Host Workshop on 'Communication and Influence' for Academic Leaders

HYDERABAD

The Centre for Academic Innovation and Advancement (CAIA) at GITAM Deemed to be University will organise a one-day self-skill enhancement workshop on 'Communication and Influence' on April 21, 2026, from 9:00 AM to 5:00 PM. According to Moses Kotikela of CAIA, the programme is designed to strengthen a critical leadership competency in academic environments—effective communication combined with the ability to influence. These skills enable university leaders to align diverse stakeholders, build trust, and translate institutional vision into coordinated action. They are also essential for driving change, resolving conflicts, fostering collaboration, and inspiring individuals within complex academic ecosystems.

Recognising that leaders serve as brand ambassadors of the university's intellectual identity, the workshop will focus on enhancing how faculty and academic leaders represent the institution across classrooms, conferences, collaborations, and student engagements.

The workshop will feature a Masterclass in Storytelling for Academic Impact, aimed at making lectures, presentations,

and academic discussions more engaging and impactful. Participants will also learn to articulate and showcase institutional strengths effectively in national and international academic forums.

In addition, the programme will introduce practical strategies to enhance classroom engagement and enrich learning experiences beyond subject expertise. A key component of the workshop will be the application of the Cohen-Bradford Influence Model, helping participants understand empathy maps and influence "currencies" to build alignment and credibility in academic initiatives.

The session will be highly interactive, incorporating discussions, real-life scenarios, and reflective exercises tailored to institutional contexts.

The workshop will be facilitated by Joozar Shukla Hastak, a Leadership and Behavioral Consultant with over 26 years of experience across sectors including IT, manufacturing,

BFSI, pharmaceuticals, GCCs, and education. She brings a unique blend of practical insights and reflective learning approaches, with a strong focus on enabling individuals and organisations to realise their highest potential.

Komatireddy Abhishek Reddy Honoured with National Award

- Lotus Lap Director Receives "Dr. A.P.J. Abdul Kalam National Young Entrepreneur Award"
- Recognised for Innovation in Education at Bharat Education Excellence Awards

HYDERABAD

In recognition of his outstanding contributions to the field of education, young education entrepreneur and Director of Lotus Lap Group of Schools, Mr. Komatireddy Abhishek Reddy, has been conferred with the prestigious "Dr. A.P.J. Abdul Kalam National Young Entrepreneur Award." The honour acknowledges not only his commitment to educational excellence but also his visionary leadership, innovation, and service towards nation-building.

The award was presented at the state-level "Bharat Education Excellence Awards" held in Hyderabad under the aegis of EAbhyas Academy. Eminent dignitaries including former Chief Secretary of Andhra Pradesh Mr. Y. R. Krishna Rao, former Chairperson (Government of India) Prof. Shantha Sinha, and Managing Director of KIMS Sunshine Hospitals Dr. A. V. Gurava Reddy graced the occasion and congratulated the awardee.

Organisers lauded Mr. Abhishek



Reddy for introducing innovative educational practices and for his continuous efforts in shaping students' personality, skills, and overall development.

Holistic Education - The Lotus Lap Edge

Lotus Lap Public Schools are known for their unique blend of traditional values and modern education systems. The institution focuses not just on academics but also on nurturing:

- Analytical thinking
- Communication skills
- Leadership qualities
- Creativity

Through activity-based learning, concept-oriented teaching, and digital methodologies, the schools create a stress-free and engaging learning en-

vironment.

Special programs such as Abacus, Vedic Maths, and Olympiad training further strengthen students' logical and mathematical abilities.

Technology-Driven Learning for the Future

With digital classrooms, smart teaching practices, and integrated computer education, Lotus Lap prepares students to compete at global standards. Educators note that such technology-enabled learning enhances confidence and encourages research-oriented thinking among students.

Value-Based Education - Building Responsible Citizens

The core mission of Lotus Lap is to nur-

ture responsible and ethical citizens. By instilling discipline, social responsibility, and environmental awareness, the schools contribute to building a better society. Their efforts in bridging the rural-urban education gap have also been widely appreciated.

Personalised Attention - Every Child Matters

With experienced faculty, continuous assessment methods, and individual attention, the school ensures that every student reaches their full potential. Equal importance is given to academics, sports, cultural activities, debates, and quizzes for overall development.

"This Award Belongs to All" - Abhishek Reddy

Speaking on the occasion, Mr. Abhishek Reddy said, "This award is not just a personal achievement; it belongs to our teachers, students, and parents. Our mission is to bring positive change in society through education. We remain committed to shaping bright futures for every child."

A Symbol of Young Leadership in Education

Educationalists opined that such young leaders are the future of the nation. Institutions like Lotus Lap are playing a crucial role in delivering quality education while building a value-driven society.





Southern Railway observes the 135th Birth anniversary of CHENNAI, APRIL 15

Southern Railway observed the 135th Birth Anniversary of Dr. B.R. Ambedkar today with a program honouring the leader. In the morning, Shri Vipin Kumar, Additional General Manager, Southern Railway garlanded the portrait of Dr. Ambedkar and paid floral tributes to the visionary leader. The ceremony was attended by Principal Heads of Departments, Senior officers, staff and members of recognized trade unions and associations. Subsequently, at the valedictory function held at Southern Railway Headquarters as part of Ambedkar Jayanthi Celebrations, Shri Vipin Kumar, Additional General Manager, Southern Railway graced the occasion as Chief Guest and distributed prizes to the winners of Essay and Quiz Competitions in the presence of Shri A. Narayanan, Principal Chief Personnel Officer (Incharge), Principal Heads of Departments and other officials. Addressing the gathering, the Additional General Manager recalled the yeoman contributions of the Architect of the Constitution, for the upliftment of the underprivileged and his enduring legacy in shaping an equitable and progressive nation.

Five killed in explosion at a house in Andhra Pradesh

AMARAVATI, APRIL 15

Five people were killed and 20 others injured in an explosion at a house in Andhra Pradesh's Sri Sathya Sai district on Wednesday, police said. The incident occurred in Kummaraavandla Palli village of Kadiri mandal. Detonators and gas cylinders, stored in the house of a worker, exploded, demolishing the entire house. Some adjoining houses were also damaged in the huge explosion. At least five people died in the explosion, while 20 others were injured. The injured were admitted to a government hospital, where the condition of 12 of them is stated to be critical. Fire-fighting personnel and police rushed to the spot and launched rescue and relief operations. Four detonators were reported to be stored in the house.

YS Jagan Alleges 'Injustice' at Juvvaladinne Fishing Harbour, Targets State Government

Questioning the current government, YS Jagan asked why the remaining works at Juvvaladinne had not been completed or handed over to fishermen.

NELLORE:

YSR Congress Party (YSRCP) president and former Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy on Wednesday alleged that the Juvvaladinne Fishing Harbour reflects the "injustices" prevailing in the state, as he intensified his criticism of the ruling coalition during his visit to the coastal facility. Interacting with local fishermen at the Fishing Harbour in Bogole Mandal, Nellore district, Jagan listened to their grievances before addressing the media. He asserted that the previous YSRCP government had prioritised



port-led development, undertaking projects worth Rs. 26,000 crore across Andhra Pradesh. "We laid the foundation for four new ports, developed 10 fishing harbours and six fish landing centres to improve fishermen's livelihoods. All required clearances were secured, and works were expedited through the establishment of a Maritime Board," he said. Recalling that the Juvvaladinne Fishing Harbour was virtually inaugurated on March 12, 2024, Jagan said plans were in place to distribute 1,250 mechanised boats to fishermen. "Had we returned to power, these boats would have already been distributed," he remarked. He added that key port projects at Machilipatnam and Mulapeta had reached 35% completion, while works at Kakina-

da and Ramayapatnam were progressing steadily. "These initiatives were designed to accelerate Andhra Pradesh's economic growth," he said. Questioning the current government, YS Jagan asked why the remaining works at Juvvaladinne had not been completed or handed over to fishermen. "It has been nearly two years since completion and over a year since dedication to the nation. Why is it still not operational?" he asked. Launching a sharp attack on the Chandrababu Naidu-led administration, he alleged that fishermen's interests were being neglected. "Instead of supporting them, there are attempts to displace fishermen from Juvvaladinne," he claimed. Jagan further alleged that boats seized from Tamil Nadu fishermen by locals and handed over to the police were later removed

without action. "Has even a single arrest been made? Those in power are responsible, which is why no action has been taken," he said. He also accused ruling party leaders of undermining fishermen's livelihoods. "TDP MPs and MLAs are acting against fishermen's interests. Those who took away the seized boats have the blessings of the Chief Minister's son," he charged. Expressing confidence in a political comeback, Jagan said the YSRCP would return to power within three years. "We will relocate the private defence company from here. All ten fishing harbours belong to fishermen—they are their rightful assets, and no one can take them away," he asserted. He concluded by assuring that fishermen's rights over the harbours would be protected at all costs.

Uttam Reaches Out To Grassroots Cadre as Congress Eyes Strong Show in Sivakasi

SIVAKASI (TAMIL NADU), APRIL 15:

Campaign activity of the Congress Party picked up in Tamil Nadu today as Telangana Minister for Irrigation and Civil Supplies, N. Uttam Kumar Reddy, addressed supporters in Sivakasi sounding a caution to voters about the risks of divisive approaches in politics. He asserted that Tamil Nadu would continue to stand as a state committed to secular and progressive governance. The senior AICC observer, who has been crisscrossing constituencies from Singanallur near Coimbatore to Kavundampalayam, arrived in Sivakasi giving a clear

message— "Congress will win all 28 seats it is contesting". His words drew loud cheers from party workers and alliance supporters, setting the tone for the final stretch of campaigning before the April 23 Assembly elections. Uttam Kumar Reddy highlighted the strength of the DMK-Congress partnership, describing the Secular Progressive Alliance as a well-oiled machine functioning effectively at all levels and reaching out to the grassroots. Calling Rahul Gandhi as the future Prime Minister of India, he urged cadres to support the DMK-Congress alliance. He exuded confidence that the Tamil Nadu electorate would give a massive mandate to the alliance retaining M K Stalin as the Chief Minister. In Sivakasi, the Congress focus was mainly on the its nominee G. Ashokan (Ashok), with Uttam Kumar Reddy appealing to the voters to support the Congress giving an emphatic victory to its candidate. He described the alliance as not just a political arrangement but a people-centric force committed to welfare and development. **Welfare Promises Reiterated** Focusing on the plans of the DMK-Congress alliance for women's empowerment, the senior Congress leader promised steps for doubling

monthly support for women from Rs 1,000 to Rs 2,000. As part of the special drive for giving jobs, he said the DMK-Congress alliance would give 3 lakh government jobs within 300 days of assuming office. The new government will be recruiting 10,000 women into the state police force. The attempts of the divisive forces to gain ground in Tamil Nadu must be rejected, he said drawing applause from the crowd. Justifying his call for a renewed mandate for the alliance, he said, it would help ensure the good work of the incumbent government continued for the overall development of Tamil Nadu.

Special session of Parliament: NDA partners in Andhra Pradesh hold key meet

AMARAVATI, APRIL 15

Leaders of the National Democratic Alliance in Amaravati, including N. Chandrababu Naidu and Pawan Kalyan, met ahead of the special Parliament session to strategize support for the Women's Reservation Bill, which proposes 33% quota for women from 2029. Meanwhile, Y. S. Sharmila Reddy opposed the proposed delimitation, warning it could reduce Andhra Pradesh's representation and central funding, and urged united resistance.

B. R. Ambedkar Birth Anniversary Observed by NE Railway

GORAKHPUR, APRIL 15, 2026

Under the chairmanship of General Manager Shri Uday Borwankar, Northeast Railway organized a (function) on April 15, 2026, at the Railway Auditorium in Gorakhpur on the occasion of the birth anniversary of "Bharat Ratna" Babasaheb Dr. Bhimrao Ambedkar. The General Manager, Shri Uday Borwankar, inaugurated the program by lighting the ceremonial lamp. On this occasion, the General Manager, Additional General Manager Shri V.K. Shukla, department heads, senior officers, office bearers of the Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe Association, and other railway employees paid floral tributes to Baba-



saheb by garlanding his portrait. At the beginning of the program, artists from the Northeast Railway Cultural Committee presented devotional songs (bhajans). On this occasion, General Manager Shri Uday Borwankar said that all of us have gathered here today on the auspicious occasion of the birth anniversary of Bharat Ratna Dr. Bhimrao Ambedkar. He described Dr. Ambedkar as a (great leader) and the "modern Buddha" of India. He said it is India's good fortune to have had such a (great personality). Dr. Ambedkar worked for the upliftment of society. His three main sources of inspiration were Gautam Buddha, Sant Kabir, and Mahatma Phule. He had around 30,000 books in his personal library and authored many books, some of which were published after his death. He lit the lamp of knowledge and was

fearless and courageous. Today's youth should take inspiration from him. Among his many great contributions, one of the most significant was the drafting of the Constitution. The General Manager said that we remember Babasaheb for his noble deeds. Chief Personnel Officer Shri Manoj Kumar, in his welcome address, said that Dr. Bhimrao Ambedkar was a great thinker, social reformer, and visionary leader. Despite being born in humble circumstances, he achieved extraordinary success through hard work, knowledge, and determination, and dedicated his entire life to the upliftment of the underprivileged and weaker sections of society. He believed that no nation can progress without equality and

justice in society. Under his leadership, the Constitution of India was drafted, which is one of the most comprehensive and powerful constitutions in the world. It grants us the rights to equality, freedom, and justice. He further stated that Babasaheb's ideas are even more relevant today. We must stay away from caste discrimination and injustice and work towards building a society where every individual and their rights are equal. We should adopt his ideals of equality, discipline, dedication to duty, and mutual respect in our lives. President of the SC/ST Association Shri Bacchu Lal and General Secretary Shri Ramprakash spoke in detail about Babasaheb's struggles, his contributions to the nation and society, and his life.

Southern Railway Sets New Passenger Service Record in FY26

SR tops Indian Railway Zones in key parameters including passenger trips revenue, occupancy, Tatkal utilization and current booking

CHENNAI, APRIL 15:

Southern Railway has concluded the financial year 2025-26 achieving significant milestones in its journey of progress marking many 'Firsts' and No.1s among other Zonal Railways. The Passenger service indices also known as commercial indices showed exemplary performance effectively contributing to the overall growth of the Zone. The performance highlights are detailed below:

Originating Passenger Revenues soar high

In FY 2025-26, registering Rs.8271.47 Crores as Originating passenger revenue, Southern Railway ranked No.1 among the Zones of Indian Railways in harnessing a record additional Passenger Revenue of Rs.735.78 Crores with a y-o-y growth of 9.8% compared to the previous financial year (FY 2024-25) revenue of Rs.7435.69 Crores. Western Railway and Central Railway stood second and third recording a revenue of Rs. 8490.61 Crores and Rs.8125.08 Crores respectively during FY 2025-26.

SR leads all Zones in Average passengers per Trip in Special trains

A clear testament to Southern Railway's efficiency and passenger-centric initiatives, the Zone leads all Zones of Indian Railways with 1312 passengers per trip in Special trains

during 2025-26, well above Indian Railways' average of 894 passengers per trip. It may be noted that Southern Railway operated 229 special trains running a total of 2513 trips and carried a total of 32.97 lakh passengers during the year 2025-26, reinforcing optimum utilization of available accommodation. North Frontier Railway followed SR with 1209 an average of 1209 passengers per trip in Special trains while South Central Railway stood third in the list with an average of 1174 passengers per trip.

SR secures first place in Highest Occupancy levels in reserved trains

Southern Railway has achieved the highest occupancy levels among all zones of IR, with 96% of its total reserved trains recording occupancy above 75%. This remarkable performance reflects SR's efficiency in managing passenger demand and optimizing train capacity. Of the total 2.6 lakh trips of trains operated during FY 2025-26, a notable 2.49 lakh train trips ran with good occupancy rates, i.e., in the range of 75-100%. In comparison, the overall IR figure stands at 87% of reserved trains achieving similar occupancy, underscoring SR's leadership in ensuring better utilization of reserved services. Western Railway and Northern Railway followed, recording an occupancy rate of 90%.



Dr. B. R. Ambedkar Jayanti Observed in South Western Railway

HUBBALLI, APRIL 15:

Bharat Ratna Dr. B. R. Ambedkar Jayanti was observed on 15.04.2026 at Rail Soudha, the Headquarters of South Western Railway, Hubballi, to commemorate the 135th Birth Anniversary of Dr. B. R. Ambedkar. Shri P. Ananth, General Manager of South Western Railway, garlanded the portrait of Babasaheb, paid floral tributes, and addressed the gathering. In his address, he highlighted that B. R. Ambedkar played a transformative role in uplifting marginalized communities and shaping India's democratic framework as the chief architect of the Constitution of India. He noted that Dr. Ambedkar, an eminent economist, lawyer, and Chairman of the Drafting Committee, rose from humble and disadvantaged beginnings to become one of the nation's greatest leaders. His life exemplifies a strong commitment to equality, inclusiveness, and continuous

learning values reflected in his pursuit of multiple academic degrees and profound scholarship. Shri P. Ananth further emphasized that beyond his legal and intellectual contributions, Dr. Ambedkar's journey stands as a powerful testament to how education and determination can empower individuals from any background. His enduring ideals of equality, dignity, and social responsibility continue to inspire generations, reminding us of our responsibility as citizens to uphold and practice these principles in our daily lives. Shri B Rama Mohana Reddy, Additional General Manager, SWR, Principal Heads of Departments, other officers, representatives of recognized unions and associations, and staff were also paid floral tributes and present on the occasion. Dr. B. R. Ambedkar Jayanti was also observed at the Divisional Offices of Hubballi, Mysuru, Bengaluru, and at the Workshops of South Western Railway.

"True development is achieved only when hunger is satisfied"

DHARANIKOTA, (AP) APRIL 15:

N.Chandrababu Naidu stated that he believes true development is possible only when the hunger of the poor is addressed. He remarked that no matter how much development is achieved, it is meaningless if the poor do not have food to eat. That is why Anna Canteens have been established across the state to feed the needy. In Dharanikota, located in the Pedakurapadu constituency of Palnadu district, the Chief Minister inaugurated an Anna Canteen along with workers. After the inauguration of the rural Anna Canteen, he purchased a token for ₹5 and had a meal with the workers. Earlier, he personally served food to poor people and laborers who came to the canteen and interacted with the beneficiaries while dining there. He also inquired

Anna Canteens support the hungry.. People's government working for food security
The 'axe party' that once obstructed food charity
Chief Minister Chandrababu inaugurates Anna Canteen in Dharanikota
62 canteens launched in rural areas across the state.. Total Anna Canteens in the state reach 269

about the taste, cleanliness, and quality of the food being served. Speaking on the occasion, he said: "I believe that true development happens only when people's stomachs are full. That is why this people's government introduced Anna Canteens to address the hunger of the poor. Providing food to the poor is my politics. N. T. Rama Rao initiated food security by providing rice at ₹2 per kilo. The name of Dokka Seethamma remains immortal as a symbol of food charity. Feeding the hungry is part of our culture. Welfare is embedded in the ideology of the Telugu Desam Party. From the ₹2 rice scheme of the past to today's Anna Canteens, we have always given top priority to food security. After coming



to power in 2024, we established Anna Canteens across the state—first in urban areas, and from today, 62 rural canteens are operational. With 204 in urban areas and 65 in rural areas, the total has reached 269. Another 5 canteens will be ready soon." **Praise for Akshaya Patra** The Chief Minister appreciated the Akshaya Patra Foundation for continuously supplying food to Anna Canteens. He said that the foundation has served 5 billion meals over the past 25 years. Meals provided at ₹5 are a

great support to the poor, auto drivers, daily wage workers, and laborers. He noted that eating at hotels is financially burdensome for the poor, and Anna Canteens help them save money for other needs. He emphasized that taste, hygiene, and quality are given top priority. The canteens provide breakfast, lunch, and dinner, ensuring three meals a day. On average, about 1,013 people eat daily at each canteen, with a daily operational cost of ₹26,250. Currently, about 210,000 people are fed daily across the state at a cost exceeding ₹54 lakh per day. The newly opened 62 rural canteens will require an additional ₹18 lakh per day (₹58 crore annually) as subsidy. Construction of these new

canteens cost ₹43 crore. Over the past 21 months, 88 million meals have been served, with ₹243 crore spent on subsidies so far.

Criticism of Previous Government

He alleged that previous rulers attacked and shut down Anna Canteens that were feeding the poor. He claimed they obstructed food donation efforts by individuals and organizations. He accused the YSR Congress Party of promoting destruction and violence, stating that instead of focusing on public welfare, they resort to threats about future actions. He criticized the party harshly, saying it does not deserve to function as a political party. The event was attended by Palnadu district in-charge minister Gottipati Ravi Kumar, MP Srikrishna Devarayalu, MLA Praveen Kumar, Collector Krithika Shukla, and others.

CM Stalin leads mega procession, says issue is delimitation not women's quota

SALEM (TAMIL NADU):

Tamil Nadu Chief Minister M K Stalin took out a march here on Wednesday as part of his ongoing election campaign and asserted that the issue was not women's reservation, but the proposed delimitation. Billed as "Women's ral-

ly," the CM was accompanied in the procession by the leaders of the DMK-led alliance parties; DMDK chief Premalatha Vijayakanth and MNM founder Kamal Haasan. In the roughly 2-km march in the western Tamil Nadu city, Stalin was joined by a large number of cadres of his party and that of the allies.

EDITORIAL

THE END OF THE ORBAN ERA:
A MANDATE FOR
DEMOCRATIC RENEWAL

The voter's verdict in Hungary, that ousted Victor Orban, Hungary's Christian-nationalist, populist and hard-right Prime Minister with a record 20 years in power (1998-2002 and 2010-2026) and four previous consecutive electoral wins, is unambiguous. According to the latest results, opposition leader Peter Magyar's Tisza party has won about 138 seats, to Mr. Orban's Fidesz party's 55. The massive two-thirds majority in the Hungarian parliament is enough to help Mr. Magyar overturn many of the Orban-era shifts on education and health, judicial independence, and the controversial NER (Nemzeti Együttműködés Rendszere) or National Cooperation System that the opposition said had led to an economic downturn, widespread corruption and crony capitalism, as well as an anti-European Union stance. Mr. Magyar, who was a Fidesz party leader until just two years ago when he quit the ruling party in protest of its policies and set up his own political movement, is unlikely to reverse Mr. Orban's anti-immigrant policies, however. Ahead of the polls, Victor Orban was endorsed by three powerful leaders, all seen as aggressors in recent conflicts — U.S. President Donald Trump, who even sent Vice-President J.D. Vance to address a public rally with Mr. Orban in Budapest last week; Russian President Vladimir Putin; and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, whom Mr. Orban supported unequivocally. Hungary actually quit the International Criminal Court after it issued a warrant against the Israeli Prime Minister for war crimes. It remains to be seen whether post-Orban Hungary turns its course on the wars in Iran, Ukraine or Gaza.

Most significantly for the world, that saw the rise of many populist leaders through elections in the 2010s, Hungary's election verdict denotes that voters worldwide may be tiring of the hard-right, anti-pluralistic, anti-immigrant and xenophobic rhetoric they favoured. Similar outcomes have been seen in elections in Canada, Australia, the Netherlands, the U.K. and Poland. Such trends also provide a check to the authoritarian single-party rule that a whole range of leaders have tried to implement using illiberal policies, politically motivated cases against the opposition, the denigration of democratic institutions and a clamp-down on free speech. Mr. Magyar has his work cut out if he aims to reverse these policies in Hungary. The real test of a democratic leader is not just winning elections, but in pursuing inclusive policies, representational of the entire population and providing accountability for their actions, long after forming the government.



OUR FESTIVALS

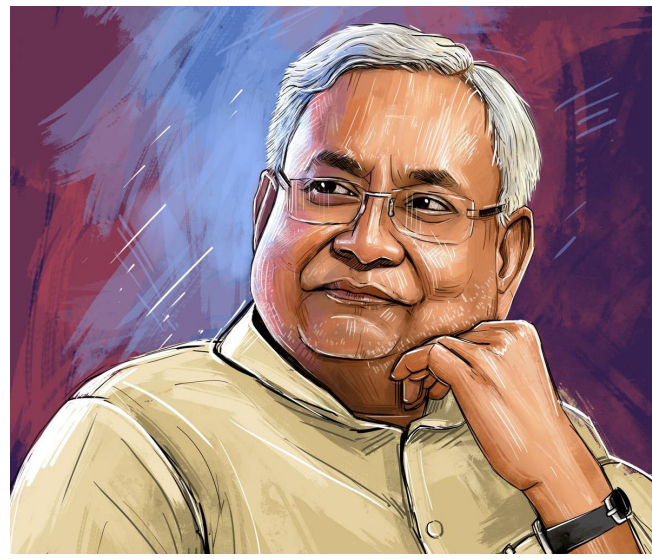
Where have our festivals gone?
Not lost—but loosened
from the roots of our own forgetting.
Like footprints erased
by a restless desert wind,
like a song stilled
in the throat of time—
the soil within us stands unnamed,
and we—
strangers to the earth
that once remembered our breath.
Thresholds fade.
Rangoli no longer sings—
it stains.
The sacred musk of earth—
once prayer, once presence—
thins into sterile air,
where glass towers rise
and even breath forgets its source.
Turmeric cracks.
Vermilion recedes.
Flowers lose the memory of
fragrance.
Laughter—
once resting on doorsteps—
now wanders, wounded,
through corridors of echo.
"We lived by grain,"
the village had said—
not hunger,
but hymn.
Now—
a seed trembles as a question,
and when the nine sacred grains
fall silent,
Sankranti lowers its gaze—
not in shame,
but in refusal
to witness our forgetting.
Fields fracture—
green collapses
into the geometry of loss.
The farmer's footsteps
slip out of time,
and in that unbearable pause—
Annapurna does not bless.
She withdraws.
This was a land
that bowed to the breath of
cattle—
where devotion moved
in the slow scripture of hooves,
where each animal
carried the quiet fire of home.
The cattle festival
was never spectacle—
it was labor
crowned with reverence,
a theology written
in dust and breath.
Once—
bells did not ring,
they remembered.
Herds did not move,
they belonged.
Now—
sorrow gathers
in the eyes of cows,
history falters

in the gait of buffaloes.
Sound recedes—
only fractures murmur
beneath the skin of silence.
There was a time—
we did not command the harvest.
We invoked it.
Crops were not made—
they were sung into being.
A seed was never small—
it was a future
entrusted to time.
Now—
even sowing hesitates,
and the soil folds inward—
a mother
who has forgotten
how to hope aloud.
The golden breath of blossoms,
the living pulse of Bathukamma—
now stands, heavy as stone,
and asks:
"Why summon me
to a land
that thirsts beyond tears?"
Millet thins into memory.
Youth fractures in silence.
Migration becomes
an exile of breath.
And in the village heart—
fear learns to stay.
"I am not the festival
of the faint,"
Dussehra once thundered—
Now—
even that voice recedes,
refusing to echo
in hollowed ground.
This is not loss.
This—
is erasure without sound.
Culture slipping
through the wounds of hooves.
Heritage dissolving
without even a cry.
A blood-song—
without voice.
A death—
without witness.
A forgetting
so complete
it forgets
it has forgotten.
We are not merely lost.
We are the undoing.
Not victims of time—
but its quiet accomplices.
And yet—
if reverence returns
to the rhythm of hooves,
if soil is touched again
not as land,
but as life—
then—
one dawn,
unannounced,
unadorned,
a single flower
will break the silence—
and in that fragile opening,
a festival
will remember
its way back.

...: Dr. Peruka Raju ...
7810032847

Nitish Kumar:

A Phenomenon of
Vision and Virtue



Few political leaders inspire admiration that transcends public office, but Nitish Kumar stands as a rare exception. My association with him dates back to his tenure as Union Minister for Railways, a period when his reputation as a thoughtful and effective administrator had already begun to take shape. However, it was in the early 2000s, during a visit to the Dr. RP Centre for Ophthalmic Sciences at All India Institute of Medical Sciences, that I came to know him more personally. What struck me then—and continues to define him—was not merely his stature as a national leader, but his profound empathy for ordinary citizens. It was through his initiative that a dedicated railway booking counter was established at AIIMS, a small yet impactful step that continues to ease the journey of countless patients.

Close interactions with Nitish Ji reveal a personality shaped by discipline, integrity, and an unwavering commitment to public service. His dedication to Bihar is not simply political rhetoric; it is deeply emotional and rooted in a sense of duty. I vividly recall his invitation to Patna to discuss the establishment of an advanced eye care facility.

What impressed me most was his seriousness of purpose—despite it being a Sunday, he convened a meeting with officials and personally monitored every detail. That initiative eventually materialized into a functioning institution, and though it faced

challenges in later years, it remains a powerful example of his ability to transform vision into reality.

His sharp intellect is equally evident in the most unexpected settings. Even during clinical examinations, he demonstrated an acute awareness of his own physiological responses, often predicting with precision the moment of pupil dilation. This attentiveness reflects a broader trait—his remarkable clarity of mind and disciplined lifestyle. Nitish Ji lives with an almost ascetic simplicity. His day begins early with pranayama and brisk walks, followed by punctual attendance at office. Hygiene and order are integral to his routine, values he promotes not through imposition but gentle insistence.

As a leader, Nitish Kumar's most enduring contribution lies in reshaping the trajectory of Bihar. When he assumed leadership, the state

grappled with systemic challenges—poor infrastructure, weak law enforcement, and limited opportunities. Under his stewardship, Bihar witnessed a remarkable transformation. Roads improved, electricity reached previously neglected regions, and governance regained credibility. More importantly, he focused on inclusive growth, ensuring that development touched the most marginalized sections of society.

His social reform initiatives stand as a testament to his progressive vision. The creation of the Extremely Backward Classes (EBC) category brought representation to communities long overlooked. His government's schemes for empowerment—particularly the provision of bicycles to schoolgirls—had a transformative effect on education and gender equality. The decision to reserve 30 percent of government jobs for women marked a bold step

toward inclusivity. Similarly, his outreach to minority communities, including the modernization of madrasas and safeguarding of community resources, earned him widespread respect.

On a personal level, I remain deeply grateful for his faith in meritocracy. In an era where political considerations often overshadow competence, Nitish Ji consistently upheld the value of academic and professional excellence. Whether through appointments to significant institutional roles or opportunities for public service, he demonstrated a rare ability to recognize and nurture talent without bias.

This quality was recognized even in his early years. My father, Bhagwat Jha Azad, often spoke of Nitish Kumar's exceptional promise during their time in the Bihar Vidhan Parishad. He would remark with conviction that Nitish was destined for national prominence, impressed by his articulate expression and depth of understanding. Those words, spoken decades ago, now seem prophetic.

Now, as Nitish Kumar is no longer the Chief Minister after an extraordinary tenure spanning over two decades, one cannot help but reflect on the rarity of such a moment. In a political landscape often defined by the pursuit of power, his decision signifies a remarkable detachment. He leaves not out of compulsion, but with the quiet confidence of a leader who has fulfilled his responsibilities. His legacy is not merely in policies or pro-

jects, but in the restoration of faith in governance.

His journey also draws attention to the values he has instilled within his family. His son, Nishant Kumar, embodies a simplicity and spiritual inclination that mirrors his father's ethos. In an age often characterized by material ambition, his grounded and introspective nature offers a refreshing contrast. It reflects the environment of integrity and restraint that Nitish Ji has cultivated both in public and private life.

As this chapter comes to a close, what remains is not a sense of finality, but anticipation. Freed from the demands of office, there lies the possibility of engaging with him in a more personal and reflective capacity. For those of us who have had the privilege of knowing him beyond the public sphere, he remains not just a political figure, but a source of inspiration.

In every sense, Nitish Kumar is more than a leader—he is a phenomenon shaped by vision, discipline, and virtue.



DR. RAJVARDHAN AZAD
(The author is a noted eye surgeon)

The Creative Economy:

A New Horizon for India's Future

India stands at a critical juncture in its economic evolution, where the drivers of growth are shifting from traditional sectors to innovation-led domains powered by human creativity. In an increasingly digital and interconnected world, the creative economy—rooted in ideas, culture, and intellectual capital—is emerging as a transformative force. For a country endowed with rich heritage and a vast, youthful talent pool, this sector offers not just economic opportunity but a pathway to global influence and inclusive development.

The landscape of the global economy is undergoing a seismic shift. Traditionally, agriculture and manufacturing were considered the twin pillars of economic progress. Later, the service sector and Information Technology (IT) rose to dominance. However, in the 21st century, a new force is emerging from the depths of human intellect, imagination, and talent: the 'Creative Economy.' It is no longer just a niche sector for arts and culture; it has evolved into a powerful engine for economic growth, generating millions of jobs and enhancing a nation's global soft power. For India—a land of immense cultural heritage, diversity, and a massive youth population—the

Economy Outlook 2024, global trade in creative services reached a staggering \$1.4 trillion in 2022, marking a 29% increase since 2017. Exports of creative goods also surged by 19%, totaling \$713 billion. Collectively, the creative economy now generates over \$2 trillion in annual revenue and supports nearly 50 million jobs worldwide. The primary contributors to this growth include software services (41.3%), research and development (30.7%), and advertising and market research (15.5%). The post-COVID era has further accelerated this trend through rapid digitalization. These statistics underscore that creativity is not just an artistic endeavor but a potent economic resource that both developed

and developing nations are eager to harness. The creative economy is a veritable goldmine of opportunities. The question remains: how effectively are we tapping into this potential?

Defining the Creative Economy and Its Scope:
The creative economy is an ecosystem of industries centered on individual creativity, skill, and talent. It generates economic value primarily through intellectual property. Its scope is vast, encompassing traditional heritage sectors like handicrafts, painting, sculpture, museums, and historical sites, as well as performing arts such as music, dance, and theater. It also includes the media and publishing industries—books, newspapers, radio, and television—alongside the dynamic worlds of cinema, animation, and digital video content. Furthermore, modern domains like architecture, fashion, graphic design, advertising, software development, computer gaming, and digital content creation are integral to this system. The digital revolution and the proliferation of the internet have acted as catalysts, allowing these creative products to reach a global audience instantaneously.

Why it Matters for India:
With its unparalleled cultural depth and the world's largest youth demographic, India holds a unique advantage. Currently, India's creative economy is valued at approximately \$30 billion, contributing nearly 2.5% to the national GDP and providing a livelihood for about 8% of the workforce. The influencer marketing sector alone is worth ₹3,375 crore, with over two lakh full-time content creators bolstering India's global digital presence. Interestingly, this revolution is not confined to Tier-1 metros; cities like Guwahati, Kochi, and Indore are emerging as decentralized creative hubs. This sector provides significant employment opportunities for rural artisans, women, and the youth, while simultaneously boosting allied industries like tourism.

Key Challenges-Where We Lag Behind:
Despite the abundance of talent, India faces several systemic hurdles in fully realizing its creative potential. The sec-

The Path Forward-Overcoming Obstacles:
To transform this sector, the government must recognize the creative economy as a priority industry and formulate a comprehensive National Policy to ensure synergy between various ministries. We need dedicated funds, grants, and low-interest credit systems tailored for creative ventures, alongside efforts to attract venture capital. Strengthening IPR laws and their effective implementation is crucial to curbing piracy. We must establish creative incubators, co-working spaces, and digital labs nationwide. Integrating creativity into the school curriculum and providing specialized training in digital marketing and animation will prepare the next generation. Finally, establishing a robust system for data collection is essential to track the sector's contribution accurately and inform future policy.
In the coming years, technologies like Artificial Intelligence (AI), Virtual Reality (VR), and Augmented Reality (AR) will fundamentally redefine creative processes and distribution. By leveraging its cultural prowess and youthful energy, India can use the creative economy not just for economic gain, but for social inclusion and regional development. As we march toward the vision of 'Viksit Bharat,' the creative sector stands as a pivotal driver that can project India's soft power onto the global stage while ensuring sustainable prosperity.

J M R DUNGA
M.sc (Maths), M.sc (Physics)
Senior Teaching Faculty in Maths



Samrat Choudhary Sworn In as Bihar CM, PM Congratulates

PM also congratulates, Shri Vijay Kumar Choudhary and Shri Bijendra Prasad Yadav on taking oath as Deputy Chief Minister of Bihar. The Prime Minister, Shri Narendra Modi, congratulated Shri Samrat Choudhary on taking oath as the Chief Minister of Bihar. The Prime Minister said that Shri Samrat Choudhary's energy, dedication to public service and grassroots experience will prove extremely beneficial for the state. He expressed confidence that under his able leadership, Bihar will touch new heights of all-round development while fulfilling the aspirations of the people. The Prime Minister also congratulated Shri Vijay Kumar Choudhary and Shri Bijendra Prasad Yadav on taking oath as Deputy Chief Ministers of Bihar. He expressed confidence that their grassroots experience and commitment towards public welfare will give a new direction and momentum to Bihar's development, and that the state will set new benchmarks in good governance, transparency and public welfare.

Exclusive: TCS Nashik case survivor's account of sexual harassment, blackmail

A woman employee at Tata Consultancy Services' Nashik office has alleged a prolonged pattern of sexual harassment, coercion, blackmail, and pressure for religious conversion involving three colleagues. According to her account, the main accused, a former college acquaintance, initially helped her secure a job and gained her trust through friendship and a marriage proposal. She claims this later turned into coercion, including forced intimacy and repeated threats. After she joined the company, the harassment allegedly continued inside and outside the workplace, with two other colleagues involved. The survivor further alleged that private information and photographs were used to blackmail her, while she was also subjected to intimidation and offensive remarks about her religion. She later discovered that the main accused was already married, which she says added to the deception.

Work at double speed: Bihar CM Samrat Choudhary sets 5-point agenda in 1st meeting

Hours after taking oath, Bihar's new Chief Minister lays down a tough five-point governance plan, signalling urgency on corruption, delivery and development, even as political reactions pour in from across the spectrum.



Bihar's new Chief Minister Samrat Choudhary moved swiftly to set the tone of his administration, issuing five key directions to officials in his first meeting at the Secretariat hours after taking oath. Choudhary, the BJP's first Chief Minister in the state, told officials to accelerate governance, warning against delays and pushing for faster resolution of public grievances. "I will get down to work from today itself," he said after the swearing-in ceremony, adding that Bihar would follow the "Modi-Nitish model" of governance.

FIVE DIRECTIVES TO

OFFICIALS
In his first official review, Choudhary laid out a clear five-point agenda:

Officials must work at double speed to ensure quick resolution of problems faced by the public. A zero-tolerance policy towards corruption must be strictly enforced. There should be no tendency to delay work at any level, from the Chief Minister's office to lower ranks. Public services at block offices, land offices and police stations must improve, with timely grievance redressal. All departments must work in a coordi-

nated manner with discipline and sensitivity to make Bihar a developed and prosperous state. The directions signal a focus on governance delivery and administrative efficiency at a time when the state heads towards a new political phase.

FOCUS ON DEVELOPMENT AND GOVERNANCE MODEL

Choudhary reiterated that his government would continue on the path laid out by Prime Minister Narendra Modi and former Chief Minister Nitish Kumar. "It should remain clear

that Bihar will continue to be governed on the Modi-Nitish model," he said. With Assembly elections on the horizon and expectations high, the new Chief Minister's early push for administrative discipline and faster delivery is being seen as an attempt to send a strong message to both bureaucracy and political rivals.

FIRST BJP CHIEF MINISTER, SHIFT IN POWER DYNAMICS

Choudhary, 57, was sworn in as Bihar's 24th Chief Minister on Wednesday at Lok Bhawan, with Governor Syed Ata Hasnain administering the oath in the presence of senior NDA leaders. The change of guard comes after Nitish Kumar stepped down and moved to the Rajya Sabha, ending his long tenure at the helm of the state government. Two JD(U) leaders, Bijendra Prasad Yadav and Vijay Kumar Choudhary, also took oath and are expected to serve as deputy chief ministers, reflecting a shift in

the alliance's power balance. POLITICAL REACTIONS POUR IN

Prime Minister Narendra Modi congratulated Choudhary, expressing confidence in his leadership. "His energy, dedication to public service, and grassroots experience will prove extremely beneficial for the state Bihar will touch new heights of all-round development," Modi said. JD(U) leaders and NDA allies echoed similar sentiments, backing the new Chief Minister to take forward the development agenda set by Nitish Kumar. JD(U) leader Khalid Anwar said, "Bihar needed such a leader who would take bold decisions all 14 crore people of Bihar hope that the state will progress strongly." However, Leader of Opposition Tejashwi Yadav struck a critical note, saying, "Congratulations on becoming the 'selected' chief minister," and urged him to address Bihar's lag on key development indicators.



B. R. Ambedkar Birth Anniversary Marked with Grand Ceremony at BLW

VARANASI, APRIL 15:

A grand and dignified ceremony was organized today, April 15, 2026, at the Technical Training Centre of Banaras Locomotive Works (BLW) under the guidance of General Manager Shri Ashutosh Pant to mark the 135th birth anniversary of Bharat Ratna Dr. B. R. Ambedkar. The program commenced with the welcome of the General Manager by Principal Chief Personnel Officer Shri Lal Ji Chaudhary, who presented him with a sapling. Thereafter, the General Manager and Principal Heads of Departments formally inaugurated the program by lighting the ceremonial lamp. On this occasion, General Manager Shri Ashutosh Pant, Principal Heads of Departments, other officers, Joint Secretary of the Staff Council Shri Pradeep Kumar Yadav, President of SC/ST Association Shri Sanjay Kumar Anand also expressed their views, highlighting Baba Saheb's struggles, principles, and contributions to society. The event was attended by Principal Chief Electrical Engineer Shri Manoj Kumar Gupta, Principal Chief Materials Manager Shri Alok Agrawal, Principal Chief Engineer Shri Shailendra Kumar Singh, PFA Shri Muktesh Mittal, Principal Chief Medical Officer Dr. Devesh Kumar, Inspector General & Principal Chief Security Commissioner Shri Devaraj Kumar Maurya, Deputy General Manager Shri Sagar, along with many other senior officers and a large number of employees. The program was gracefully and effectively conducted by Assistant Personnel Officer (Workshop) Shri Piyush Minj, while the vote of thanks was delivered by Deputy Chief Personnel Officer (Headquarters) Shri Sameer Paul.

Govindas Konthoujam Urges Public to Avoid Misinformation

IMPHAL, APRIL 15, 2026:

Govindas Konthoujam, Hon'ble Home Minister, Government of Manipur appealed the public to refrain from misinformation during a Press Conference held today at the Minister's Block, New Secretariat at Mantripukhri, Imphal West District. The conference was chaired by Govindas Konthoujam, Home Minister and was also attended by Thongam Basanta, MLA, Nambol Assembly Constituency; Tongbram Robindro, MLA, Thanga Assembly Constituency and Irengbam Nalini Devi MLA,

Oinam Assembly Constituency. Addressing the media personnel, Govindas Konthoujam informed that there has been a tense situation in the Bishnupur district since yesterday due to an unfortunate incident which has further escalated in the district. Govindas Konthoujam stated that based on specific source, a joint team of CISF, Assam Rifles, and State forces apprehended a drug peddler, Sabhir Ahmad, from Tulihal Airport, Imphal at around 10.30 A.M. During interrogation, he revealed the presence of more drugs and weapons at Kwakta, Bishnupur District. Accordingly, Assam



Rifles personnel in plain clothes escorted him to the location. However, on the way, an unfortunate incident occurred when local women, who were frisking vehicles, stopped the team, leading to a miscommunication, claiming that a particular tribe was inside the vehicle which created confusion and suspicion among

the public. Due to this misunderstanding, tensions escalated quickly, and the situation turned violent. People started attacking, and in the chaos, some individuals were injured. The vehicle was set on fire, and more unrest spread in the area, he added. He further mentioned that security forces, including Assam Rifles and commands, arrived and carried out rescue operations. Some people were safely evacuated. Local volunteers and groups also helped in rescuing and controlling the situation. State security forces, along with central forces and the army, have been deployed and combing

operations are ongoing to control the situation and prevent further unrest. The incident reportedly involved armed individuals and has raised serious concerns about safety and law and order. Authorities are working to identify and take action against those responsible within the shortest possible time, Govindas Konthoujam informed. Govindas Konthoujam appealed for calm and request everyone not to spread panic or misinformation. The authorities concerned, including the MLAs of Moirang and Kumbi constituencies are already informed and necessary steps are being taken.

Haryana Approves ₹298 Cr CAMPA Green Plan, Boosts Plantation & Wildlife Protection

CHANDIGARH, APRIL 15

The Government of Haryana has approved an ambitious ₹298.43 crore Annual Plan of Operations (APO) under the Compensatory Afforestation Management and Planning Authority (CAMPA), marking a significant step toward ecological sustainability and climate-responsive governance. The decision was taken during the 10th Steering Committee meeting chaired by Chief Secretary Anurag Rastogi, who emphasized that the initiative is a long-term investment in the state's environmental future, focused on accountability, measurable outcomes, and timely execution. A central component of the plan is a massive afforestation drive. Over 20 lakh saplings will be planted across 1,882 hectares,



while maintenance activities will cover an additional 4,518 hectares to ensure the survival of existing plantations. To address urban pollution and rising temperatures, the state will also develop dense urban forests using the Miyawaki technique across 16 hectares, enhancing green cover in cities and improving air quality. In a move toward sustaina-

ble governance, solar power systems of 15 KW capacity will be installed in forest offices across all 22 districts. This initiative aims to reduce dependence on conventional electricity, cut operational costs, and lower carbon emissions from government infrastructure. The plan also prioritizes ecologically sensitive regions such as the Shiv-

alikh Hills and the Aravalli Range. An outlay exceeding ₹33 crore has been allocated for Catchment Area Treatment (CAT) works in these areas, focusing on soil conservation, water harvesting, and restoration of degraded land. These interventions are expected not only to improve environmental conditions but also to generate employment for local communities. To strengthen forest and wildlife protection, the APO includes the establishment of 20 new forest check posts, deployment of 60 additional forest watchers, and procurement of patrolling vehicles. Rescue vehicles for injured wildlife and residential facilities for frontline staff have also been approved, aiming to enhance surveillance,

response capabilities, and working conditions. A notable people-centric initiative under the plan is the launch of "Haritima: Hariyali ka Rang, Haryana ke Sang." This programme will engage students from Classes 6 to 10 in government schools through 70 eco-camps across forests, wildlife sanctuaries, and ecotourism sites. Inspired by experiential learning models, the initiative seeks to build environmental awareness among young citizens. To ensure transparency and effective utilization of funds, the plan incorporates third-party monitoring and evaluation. A dedicated Project Management Unit (PMU) will oversee land identification, execution, and coordination among departments.

Death toll in Chhattisgarh Vedanta power plant blast rises to 14, 20 hospitalised

The blast occurred at around 2:30 at the Vedanta power plant in Singhitarai on Tuesday. The blast occurred at around 2:30 pm at the Vedanta power plant in Singhitarai on Tuesday. The death toll from the boiler explosion at a Vedanta power plant in Chhattisgarh's Sakti has risen to 14, while around 20 injured workers remain under treatment with several of them in critical condition, in what is being described as one of the most serious industrial tragedies in recent history. The incident occurred

around 2:30 pm on Tuesday at the company's thermal power facility in Singhitarai, when a tube carrying high-pressure steam from the boiler to the turbine exploded with immense force. The blast caused severe burn injuries to workers present at the site, many of whom were engaged in maintenance and painting work. Four workers died on the spot, while others succumbed to their injuries during treatment at various hospitals. In total, around 30 workers were injured in the incident.

Urban Challenge Fund Guidelines Launched

Rs1 Lakh Crore UCF to Catalyse Rs4 Lakh Crore Urban Investments: Focus on Tier-II & Tier-III Cities
Credit Repayment Guarantee Sub-Scheme to Enable Smaller Cities Access Market-Based Financing
Fund will support transformative projects across key sectors such as redevelopment of old city areas and markets, urban mobility and last-mile connectivity, non-motorised transport, water and sanitation: Shri Manohar Lal

investments and making cities financially robust and investment-ready. The Minister highlighted that India's cities are emerging as engines of economic growth, innovation and employment generation. Achieving the vision of Viksit Bharat @2047 will depend on how effectively cities are planned, financed and governed. He noted that while initiatives such as AMRUT, Swachh Bharat Mission and Smart Cities Mission have strengthened urban infrastructure, the next phase requires cities to become investment-ready and financially sustainable. The Minister underlined that the Urban Challenge Fund, with a total Central Assistance of ₹1 lakh crore, is designed as a catalytic instrument to



mobilise nearly four times, thereby ensuring financial discipline and encouraging private participation. The Minister further informed that out of the total outlay, ₹90,000 crore has been earmarked for projects, ₹5,000 crore for project preparation and capacity building, and

₹5,000 crore for the Credit Repayment Guarantee Sub-Scheme. The CRGSS will particularly benefit smaller cities, including Tier-II and Tier-III cities and cities in hilly and North-Eastern regions, by enabling them to access market-based financing through credit guarantees. Shri Manohar Lal emphasised that the Fund will support transformative projects across key sectors such as redevelopment of old city areas and markets, urban mobility and last-mile connectivity, non-motorised transport, water and sanitation infrastructure, and climate-resilient urban development. The focus, he noted, will be on scalable, impactful and bankable projects that can deliver long-term eco-

omic and social benefits. Highlighting the role of Urban Local Bodies (ULBs), the Minister said that cities will be encouraged to strengthen their financial capacity, adopt reforms and actively participate in market-based financing mechanisms. He urged States and ULBs to view the Urban Challenge Fund not just as a scheme but as an opportunity to build globally competitive, resilient and investment-ready cities. Secretary, Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs, Shri Srinivas Katikithala, in his remarks, stated that India's urbanisation is entering a decisive phase. Urban Challenge Fund introduces a market-linked, reform-driven and outcome-oriented framework for urban

infrastructure development. He highlighted that the Fund aligns infrastructure creation with financial sustainability and institutional strengthening, while placing strong emphasis on project bankability and fiscal discipline. He further noted that the success of the Urban Challenge Fund will depend on sustained collaboration between the Centre, States and Urban Local Bodies, along with effective implementation of reforms and capacity building initiatives. An e-directory linking cities with financial institutions, banks and credit rating agencies was also launched on the occasion to facilitate effective implementation of UCF. The event also witnessed the digital signing of a Mem-

orandum of Understanding (MoU) between the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs and all States, reaffirming a collaborative commitment towards the effective implementation of the Urban Challenge Fund. In addition, Letters of Intent (LoIs) were digitally signed with key stakeholders, including knowledge partners such as academic and research institutions and capacity building centres, financial institutions comprising banks, NBFCs, international financial institutions, credit rating agencies and merchant bankers, as well as private sector entities, marking a significant step towards fostering a comprehensive ecosystem for financing, capacity building and execution of urban transformation projects. The Urban Challenge Fund will be implemented from FY 2025-26 to FY 2030-31, aiming to transform the cities into new growth hubs and drivers of India's urban future.



Iran's new challenge to US, Israel: Will rebuild faster than you can destroy

In the course of their war against Iran, the US and Israel expanded their air and missile strikes from primarily military targets to critical civilian infrastructure, including key railway bridges and railway tracks. Both US President Donald Trump and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu had issued strong warnings about crippling Iran's transport and communication networks, with Trump repeatedly threatening to bomb bridges, power plants, and other infrastructure to send Iran "back to the Stone Age". Yet Iran appears to be demonstrating a remarkable capacity for rapid reconstruction.

Iranian embassies are highlighting the pace of reconstruction as if to mock and challenge the US and Israel. Since the fragile ceasefire took effect on April 8, Iranian officials claim to have restored several damaged rail lines and bridges in record time—often within 40 to 96 hours, using domestic engineering teams. These efforts have been prominently amplified by Iranian diplomatic accounts on X. Railways remain vital for moving large volumes of passengers and freight over long distances, which is precisely why they have long been attractive targets in modern conflicts. During the Vietnam War, for example, US forces repeatedly struck rail hubs in North Vietnam to sever supply lines from China. Just as Vietnamese crews showed impressive resilience in repairing damage under fire, Iranian teams are now showcasing similar determination and speed in restoring their battered rail network.

New satellite images reveal chaos of US rescue op, aircraft debris in Iran

Fresh satellite images have shed new light on the chaotic US rescue mission of two crew members who went missing after Tehran downed an F-15E fighter jet earlier this month amid the conflict.

Latest high-resolution satellite images from Iran have shed new light on the chaotic US rescue mission of two personnel who went missing after Tehran downed an F-15E Strike Eagle fighter jet earlier this month. The images, released by Soar Atlas, show multiple US aircraft wreckage at an abandoned dirt airstrip near Shahreza in Isfahan province, which houses Iran's key nuclear complex. These raise fresh questions on the real objective of the US operation, which involved an armada of 155 aircraft to rescue just two airmen. While Donald Trump called it "one



of the most daring rescue operations", the US provided scant details of its losses during the mission. The remote airfield is located around 40 km from the Isfahan nuclear complex, which holds Iran's primary stockpile of highly enriched uranium, key to making nuclear weapons. Iran has alleged that it was a "failed" US operation to seize uranium. The reason it provided was simple. The area where the American airman was downed in Kohgiluyeh

and Boyer-Ahmad province was far off from where US troops landed to rescue him. While the pilot and the weapons systems officer (WSO) were eventually rescued, the mission ran into major challenges beyond enemy lines.

WHAT NEW SATELLITE IMAGES SHOW?

Satellite images now show wreckage of at least two US C-130 Hercules transport aircraft, and possibly two MH-6 "Little Bird" helicopters on the right side of the airfield.

Trump had admitted that the two C-130 aircraft, which ferried around 100 elite US forces, had to be blown up after they got stuck in the sandy desert terrain. This was done to prevent sensitive technology or equipment from falling into Iranian hands—a standard practice in combat. However, no details were provided on the MH-6 helicopters, possibly deployed to provide close air support to the landing force. Considering that the US troops landed deep inside Iran, the helicopters were likely transported by the C-130 aircraft. Iran, however, had claimed it struck the two US helicopters during the operation. The helicopters could have been destroyed by the US troops, as there might have been no time or room to load them onto the replacement aircraft. These helicopters have a maximum flight range of 420 km. The nearest US military base is around 400

km away near the Iraq border. Considering the risks, the US might have decided to destroy the helicopters at the site. The new satellite images also reveal that in the days following the operation, Iran appears to have moved quickly to secure the airstrip. The images show a dirt security perimeter around the destroyed aircraft. Additionally, piles of dirt have been placed throughout the runway, rendering it unusable for any future aircraft landings or operations. Given its proximity to the Isfahan nuclear complex, this makes any potential future ground operation to seize the highly enriched uranium, believed to be stored in tunnels, more difficult. In fact, experts suggested that Iran might use this tactic at other countryside airstrips across the country and near nuclear facilities. This will make any future US operation in Iran even harder and more dangerous.



Children, needles, a deadly lapse: Inside Pakistan hospital linked to HIV outbreak

A shocking undercover investigation has found that a government hospital in Pakistan, linked to a major HIV outbreak among children, continued unsafe medical practices months after authorities promised action.

The report by the BBC, based on hours of video footage filmed inside Tehsil Headquarters (THQ) Hospital in Taunsa, shows repeated violations of basic safety protocols, raising serious concerns about how hundreds of children may have been exposed to the virus. Eight-year-old Mohammed Amin died shortly after testing positive for HIV. His family said his final days were marked by severe pain and relentless fever. Not long after, his sister Asma was also diagnosed with the virus. The family believes both children contracted HIV during routine treatment at the same hospital, allegedly through contaminated syringes.

OUTBREAK TRACED TO INJECTION PRACTICES

According to the BBC investigation, at least 331 children in Taunsa tested positive for HIV between November 2024 and October 2025. Analysis of affected families points away from mother-to-child transmission. Of the 97 affected families tested, only four mothers were found to be HIV-positive. Mohammed and Asma's mother also tested negative, reinforcing concerns that unsafe medical practices may have played a central role in the outbreak. A provincial screening programme listed "contaminated needles" as the mode of transmission in more than half the cases, highlighting concerns over unsafe medical practices.

FOOTAGE REVEALS REUSE OF SYRINGES

During 32 hours of undercover filming in late 2025, BBC journalists documented repeated violations of basic infection control protocols at THQ Taunsa. Syringes were seen being reused on multi-dose medicine vials, potentially contaminating the contents. In some instances, the same vial was then used to treat multiple children, raising the risk of virus transmission. Medical experts reviewing the footage warned that even replacing the needle does not eliminate the risk if the syringe body remains contaminated. The investigation also recorded staff administering injections without sterile gloves dozens of times, and handling medical waste improperly—practices that violate established safety norms.

OFFICIAL DENIALS AND GOVERNMENT RESPONSE

Despite the evidence, the hospital's current medical superintendent denied wrongdoing, questioning the authenticity of the footage and insisting the facility was safe. Earlier, in March 2025, authorities had suspended the then medical superintendent following initial reports of the outbreak and promised a crackdown. However, the BBC found that unsafe practices persisted months later. A joint review by the World Health Organisation (WHO) and UNICEF also flagged serious lapses in infection control in local health facilities, including reuse of intravenous equipment and poor hygiene conditions.

Sanctioned Chinese ship fails to break US blockade, reverses course to Hormuz

The Chinese-owned tanker was among at least eight ships crossing the waterway on Tuesday, the first day of the US blockade. A US destroyer stopped two oil tankers attempting to leave the Iranian port of Chabahar on the Gulf of Oman on Tuesday, a US official said.



The US-sanctioned tanker Rich Starry made its way back to the Strait of Hormuz on Wednesday after exiting the Gulf the day before, shipping data showed, failing to break through a US blockade on vessels calling at Iranian ports. US President Donald Trump announced the blockade on Sunday after weekend peace talks in Islamabad be-

tween the US and Iran failed to reach a deal. "During the first 24 hours, no ships made it past the US blockade," the US Central Command said on X, adding that six vessels complied with directions from US forces to turn around to re-enter an Iranian port. The Chinese-owned tanker was among at least eight

ships crossing the waterway on Tuesday, the first day of the US blockade. A US destroyer stopped two oil tankers attempting to leave the Iranian port of Chabahar on the Gulf of Oman on Tuesday, a US official said. The Rich Starry and its owner, Shanghai Xuanrun Shipping Co, were placed under US sanctions for

dealing with Iran. The company could not be reached for a comment. The Rich Starry is a medium-range tanker carrying about 250,000 barrels of methanol that was loaded at the port of Hamriyah in the United Arab Emirates, Kpler data showed. The blockade has created even further uncertainty for shippers, oil companies and war risk insurers. Traffic remains at only a fraction of the 130-plus daily crossings before the US and Israel's war on Iran began on February 28, industry sources said on Tuesday. Another US-sanctioned vessel, the Very Large Crude Carrier Alicia that has a record of carrying Iranian oil since 2023, is entering the Gulf via the Strait on Wednesday, Kpler and LSEG data showed. The empty

tanker, capable of carrying 2 million barrels of oil, is heading to Iraq to load a cargo on Thursday, Kpler data showed.

Separately, the Malta-flagged VLCC Agios Fanourios I entered the Gulf via the Strait on Wednesday in a second attempt to transit, according to the data. The tanker was among several vessels that tried to enter the Gulf on Sunday during the US-Iran ceasefire deal.

It is heading to Iraq to load Basra crude for Vietnam's Nghi Son refinery, according to the data and trade sources.

Eastern Mediterranean Maritime, which manages the Agios Fanourios I, and Nghi Son Refinery and Petrochemical did not immediately respond to requests for comment.

JD Vance Praises 'Amazing' Indian-Origin In-Laws

US Vice President JD Vance on Tuesday showed praise on his Indian-origin in-laws, saying they exemplify how immigrants have "enriched" the United States, prioritising American interests above all else, even as he flagged concerns over alleged fraud in the H-1B visa system.

Speaking at an event at the University of Georgia, Vance, who is married to Usha

Vance, whose family traces its roots to Andhra Pradesh, recognised the contributions of immigrants while advocating stricter oversight of immigration programmes, underscoring that becoming an American citizen comes with the responsibility of prioritising US interests. "I think there is a lot of fraud in the H-1B system. And I, I think you can, you can believe, on the one hand, that there's a lot of fraud in the H-1B system, while also believing that there are people who have



come to the United States in the past who have enriched this country," Vance said. "And look, I, I, I'm married to the daughter of immigrants from India and,

you know, I, I love my in-laws, and they're great people and they've been great contributors to the United States of America," he added. The remarks

came in response to a question from an Indian-origin attendee at a Turning Point USA event, who highlighted prolonged green card wait times for families on H-1B visas. She described the challenges faced by her family, which has lived in the United States for over a decade but continues to face delays due to country-based quotas and processing backlogs. Vance said that becoming an American citizen comes with a responsibility to put the country first, regardless of one's back-

ground. "I think that when you become an American citizen, whether your family is 9 generations of lineage in the United States or whether your family has 0 generations of lineage in the United States, one of the responsibilities that we must expect of citizens...that you have to think about the best interest of the country and not the country you came from beforehand and not of any sort of any, any group that you came from, you've got to think of yourself as an American," he said.

Secret Saudi-Pakistan war pact exposed as Islamabad's neutral role unravels

Leaked documents reveal a secret Saudi-Pakistan defense pact that could draw Islamabad into the Iran conflict, raising doubts about its neutrality as ceasefire talks collapse and tensions escalate.



Just as Pakistan tried to play peacemaker in a volatile Middle East war, a quiet military deployment—and a louder leak—has cast doubt on how neutral it really is.

According to Drop Site News, secret documents reveal a previously undisclosed Saudi Arabia-Pakistan mutual defense pact that could pull Islamabad directly into the very conflict it was attempting to mediate between the United States and Iran. The report comes after Saudi Arabia announced the arrival of Pakistani military forces, including aircraft, at King Abdulaziz Air Base, a move framed as boosting "operational readiness" but now seen in a far more consequential light. Drop Site reports that the deployments stem from a defense agreement signed in 2025 that states any aggression against one country shall be considered an aggression against both, raising the possibility that Pakistan could be drawn into a broader regional war. Pakistan had been hosting high-stakes ceasefire talks between Washington and Tehran when the Saudi announcement was made, a timing that appeared to undercut Islamabad's role as a neutral mediator. The talks ultimately collapsed, with the US delegation leaving without a deal. The details of the agreement had never been made public or reviewed by Pakistan's parliament. According to the leaked archive, the pact builds on earlier military co-

MEDIATION OR ENTANGLEMENT?

The revelations offer new context for Pakistan's urgency in trying to broker a ceasefire. Islamabad maintains ties with both Iran and the United States but is also heavily reliant on Saudi financial backing. Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar had earlier acknowledged the pact publicly, warning Tehran to "take care of our pact with Saudi Arabia," signalling the delicate balancing act underway. At the same time, Pakistan's leadership has pushed to avoid direct involvement in the war, aware of the domestic and strategic risks. A conflict with Iran—which has significant public sympathy in Pakistan—could trigger internal unrest and complicate already tense regional dynamics.



Two wanted militants killed in NW Pakistan

PESHAWAR: (APR 15)

Two wanted militants were killed in an operation conducted by the Counter Terrorism Department in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province in northwest Pakistan, police said Wednesday.

According to an official from the Counter Terrorism Department (CTD), the operation was carried out near the Northern Bypass in the provincial capital Peshawar on the basis of intelligence reports late on Tuesday night.

The CTD team laid an ambush in the area, which led to an exchange of fire with the militants.

UN watchdog's chief flags boost in North Korea's nuclear weapons capacity

Enriching uranium can provide an alternative, and experts say, a more effective, path to acquiring weapons-grade material in addition to reprocessing spent plutonium extracted from a nuclear reactor.



North Korea has made "very serious" advances in its abilities to turn out nuclear weapons, with the probable addition of a new uranium enrichment facility, as it stepped up activity at a key complex, IAEA chief Rafael Grossi said on Wednesday. Enriching uranium can provide an alternative, and experts say, a more effective, path to acquiring weapons-grade material in addition to reprocessing spent plutonium extracted from a nuclear reactor. Speaking in Seoul, the head of the International Atomic Energy Agency confirmed a rapid rise in activity at the five-megawatt

reactor, the reprocessing unit, a light water reactor and other facilities at the North's Yongbyon nuclear complex.

NORTH'S NUCLEAR PROGRAMME ESTIMATED AT FEW DOZEN WARHEADS

North Korea's nuclear programme was estimated at a few dozen warheads, he told a news conference, citing signs of activity such as the operation of a light water reactor and activation of other facilities besides Yongbyon.

"All of them point to a very serious increase in the ca-

capabilities of the DPRK in the area of nuclear weapons production," Grossi said, using the initials of the North's official name, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea.

The watchdog had observed construction of a new facility similar to Yongbyon's uranium enrichment halls, he said, adding that analysis of external features showed a significant expansion of enrichment capacity. Grossi told a meeting of the agency's governors this month that it was monitoring a new building at Yongbyon

with similarities to an enrichment facility at Kangson, another key nuclear site near the capital, Pyongyang.

SATELLITE IMAGERY SUPPORTS IAEA ASSESSMENT

Satellite imagery from April supported the IAEA's assessment, the US-based Center for Strategic and International Studies said on Monday.

It indicated completion of a suspected uranium enrichment plant, capable of producing weapons-grade material, the centre said in a report.

On Wednesday, Grossi said the agency had not seen any evidence of Russian technology being used in North Korea's nuclear weapons programme.

References in a cooperation pact both countries signed last year appeared to be limited to civilian nuclear projects, though it was too early to draw firm conclusions, he added. "Moving towards nuclear weapons would never give any country increased security," Grossi said, but could

instead trigger proliferation.

SOUTH KOREA'S NUCLEAR SUBMARINE PLAN

Turning to South Korea's programme to build nuclear-powered submarines, Grossi said he invited Seoul to work closely with the agency to avert proliferation risks, with formal talks to begin on the matter. Naval reactors pose special challenges as nuclear fuel on submarines can go uninspected for long periods during missions.

"It is essential that this activity is not conducive to proliferation of nuclear weapons," Grossi said, adding that the IAEA would seek an "ironclad guarantee" against any diversion of the material. South Korea's submarine ambitions advanced after President Lee Jae Myung and US President Donald Trump finalised joint steps on trade and security last November, in which Washington approved its ally's plan to build the nuclear-powered vehicles.

Fraud Outpaces Defences Firms Turn to AI, ML: Experian Report

MUMBAI, APRIL 14

Fraud threats are evolving faster than corporate defences, leaving businesses struggling to keep pace, according to a new study released by Experian based on research by Forrester Consulting.

The report, which surveyed nearly 1,000 senior fraud leaders across nine countries including India, highlights a widening gap between increasingly sophisticated fraud attacks and existing prevention capabilities. About 69% of Indian organisations said their current technology stack is inadequate to counter rapidly evolving fraud threats. At the same time, 64% are planning to integrate fraud prevention with credit risk assessment as part of a broader risk management strategy.

AI, ML Gain Ground
Machine learning (ML) is emerging as a key defence tool. Around 54% of respondents reported improved fraud detection accuracy after adopting ML, while 50% said it helped uncover fraud missed by traditional rules-based systems. Additionally, 65% of deci-



sion-makers said ML improves case prioritisation, boosting analyst productivity.

Real-time detection and the ability to retrain models with fresh data were cited as major advantages by 55% of respondents.

However, capability gaps remain. Nearly 76% of organisations admitted lacking sufficient in-house expertise to develop or manage ML systems, even as 74% plan to integrate ML into their fraud workflows.

GenAI Raises Alarm

The rise of generative AI (GenAI) is intensifying concerns. About 65% of businesses consider GenAI the most significant fraud threat yet, while 74% reported an increase in AI-driven fraud attempts.

Further, 69% said existing KYC and identity verification systems are ill-equipped to detect AI-generated documents, and 57% struggle to determine whether GenAI was involved in fraud incidents.

Sector Trends

The report noted a surge in social engineering and identity theft in financial services and telecom sectors, while e-commerce is witnessing a rise in "friendly fraud" and refund abuse.

Identity verification has emerged as the most targeted security layer as fraud becomes faster, cheaper and more scalable, often driven by organised global networks.

Need for Collaboration

The study emphasised the importance of collaboration and shared intelligence. Around 63% of respondents said proven returns from peer networks would accelerate adoption of advanced fraud solutions.

Industry leaders stressed that businesses must modernise quickly by adopting machine learning, behavioural analytics and device intelligence, alongside collaborative fraud intelligence networks.

With 71% of firms now investing more in fraud technology than human analysts, the report underlines a clear shift towards automated, AI-driven defence systems to safeguard the growing digital economy.

JioGold Unveils Akshaya Tritiya Offers with Bonus Gold, Rewards

HYDERABAD, APRIL 15

Marking the auspicious occasion of Akshaya Tritiya, JioGold has announced a limited-period campaign offering bonus digital gold, reward points and lucky draw benefits to customers investing through the JioFinance app.

The three-day campaign, scheduled from April 19 to April 21, aims to encourage digital gold investments by providing assured rewards and added value on purchases. Under the offer, customers buying digital gold worth ₹2,000 or more will receive 1% additional gold, capped at ₹1,000 per transaction. The bonus gold will be credited to users' JioGold accounts within four business days. Each user can avail the benefit for up to 50 eligible transactions during the campaign period.

To further incentivise



investments, JioGold is offering double rewards. Customers making lumpsum purchases of ₹5,000 or more will earn 2x JioPoints. Similarly, those whose Systematic Investment Plan (SIP) contributions cross ₹1,500 in April during the offer window will also receive 2x JioPoints. The reward points will be credited instantly, with a monthly cap of 5,000 points per customer.

In addition, investors making lumpsum or SIP transactions of ₹10,000 or more during the campaign will qualify for the Akshaya

Tritiya Mega Draw. Five winners will receive 1 gram of 24-karat digital gold, which will be credited to their accounts on April 30.

Positioned as a flexible and secure investment option, JioGold allows users to start investing from as little as ₹10, with the option to redeem holdings as cash or physical gold coins.

The initiative taps into the strong cultural significance of gold buying during Akshaya Tritiya, traditionally considered an ideal time to begin new financial investments.

Markets Rebound Sharply Nifty Ends Above 24,200



NEW DELHI, APRIL 15

The domestic stock market staged a strong rebound on Wednesday, with benchmark indices closing significantly higher amid positive global cues and easing geopolitical concerns.

The BSE Sensex surged 1,263.67 points or 1.64 per cent to settle at 78,111.24, while the Nifty 50 advanced 388.65 points or 1.63 per cent to close at 24,231.30, reclaiming the crucial 24,200 mark.

All sectoral indices ended in the green, reflecting broad-based buying across segments. The Nifty IT emerged as the top performer, rallying 2.8 per cent. Nifty Media and Nifty Realty also posted strong gains of over 2 per cent each. Sectors such as Capital Goods, Oil & Gas, Power, Infrastructure and Consumer Durables registered gains of around 2 per cent.

Among the top gainers on the Nifty were InterGlobe Aviation, Max Healthcare, Power Grid Corporation of India, Wipro and Eternal. On the losing side were Dr. Reddy's Laboratories, Bharti Airtel and ICICI Bank.

On the Bombay Stock Exchange, more than 150 stocks touched their 52-week highs. Notable among them were Thermax, Kirloskar Oil Engines, Siemens, Welspun

Corp, Godawari Power and Ispat, Hindalco Industries, Timken India, Power Finance Corporation, MCX India, Anand Rathi Wealth, Adani Power, ABB India, Tata Power, NMDC, Sona BLW Precision Forgings, Adani Energy Solutions, Hitachi Energy India, Indian Bank, Titan Company and Honasa Consumer, among others. Metal stocks witnessed robust buying, with Welspun Corp, Hindustan Copper, Hindalco Industries, Hindustan Zinc and APL Apollo Tubes gaining between 3 per cent and 4.7 per cent.

Realty stocks also ended on a strong note. Lodha Developers, Anant Raj, Aditya Birla Real Estate, DLF and Prestige Estates Projects recorded gains ranging between 3 per cent and 5 per cent.

Information Technology stocks snapped a two-day losing streak and settled nearly 3 per cent higher. Shares of Wipro, Infosys, Tata Consultancy Services and HCL Technologies rose between 1 per cent and 3 per cent.

Metal stocks too mirrored the broader bullish trend, with Welspun Corp, Hindustan Copper, Hindalco Industries, Hindustan Zinc and APL Apollo Tubes posting gains in the range of 3 per cent to 4.7 per cent, in line with improved sentiment across global commodity markets.

CII Hosts Conference on AI, Cyber Resilience & Data Protection in Hyderabad

Hyderabad, April 15: The Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) on Tuesday organised a conference titled "Beyond Security: Driving Trust through AI, Cyber Resilience and Data Protection", bringing together industry leaders, policymakers, and cybersecurity experts to deliberate on emerging digital risks and the growing importance of trust in the digital economy.

Addressing the gathering, Mr. M. Goutham Reddy, Chairman, CII Telangana, said that trust has become a decisive factor for business success in the digital era. He noted that while organisations are rapidly adopting Artificial Intelligence (AI), equal emphasis must be placed on governance, security, and ethical accountability to ensure sustainable growth.

Speakers at the session highlighted that cybersecurity and data protection



have moved beyond IT functions and are now critical boardroom priorities, influencing business continuity, brand reputation, and regulatory compliance. The discussions also focused on India's evolving data protection landscape, particularly the implementation of the Digital Personal Data Protection Act.

Mr. Sivakumar Gunturu, CEO of Maple Software Pvt Ltd, emphasised

that digital adoption is no longer optional but central to business growth. He stressed that cyber resilience and data privacy must be integrated into organisational strategy, with trust emerging as a key differentiator.

In his address, Mr. Goutham Reddy pointed out that while large enterprises are progressing in building robust security frameworks, micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs)

face challenges due to limited resources and expertise. He called for industry collaboration and shared platforms to democratise cybersecurity practices. The conference featured panel discussions on critical issues such as managing vendor dependencies, securing distributed digital environments, and balancing decisions on technology adoption. Experts noted that the rise of AI is expanding organisational attack surfaces and increasing data privacy risks, making traditional security approaches inadequate.

A panel discussion on emerging threats highlighted concerns over "Shadow AI," where employees use unauthorised AI tools, potentially exposing sensitive data. Participants called for stronger governance mechanisms and enterprise-wide visibility to mitigate such risks.

From the public sector, officials from the Unique Identification Authority of India under the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology outlined measures to strengthen digital identity systems. They emphasised the role of Aadhaar-based authentication and upcoming initiatives to enhance secure digital services.

Experts also underscored that compliance alone is insufficient to prevent cyber breaches. Instead, organisations must adopt a proactive approach by embedding security into their systems and processes.

The overarching message of the conference was clear: trust must form the foundation of digital transformation. Industry leaders stressed that policies, technology, governance, and skills must evolve together to ensure that AI-driven growth remains secure, ethical, and sustainable.

India Leads in AI Growth: OpenAI

NEW DELHI, APRIL 15

India ranks among the world's most advanced artificial intelligence (AI) markets, particularly in areas such as coding, data analysis and complex reasoning, US-based AI firm OpenAI said on Wednesday.

According to the company, India is among the top five countries globally in "thinking capability" usage per person, measured through reasoning tokens used by ChatGPT Plus subscribers.

The report also highlighted India as one of the fastest-growing AI builder ecosystems, noting a four-fold surge in Codex users within just two weeks of the Codex app launch in February 2026.

However, AI adoption remains uneven across the country. Usage is highly



concentrated in a few urban centres, with advanced capabilities even more skewed, pointing to a significant opportunity to expand access beyond early adopters.

Oliver Jay, Managing Director (International) at OpenAI, said the key challenge is extending AI benefits beyond leading cities to the broader population. He emphasised that

bridging this gap would require improving access, building digital skills and enabling more meaningful use cases, driven by India's young and rapidly adopting population.

The findings show that the top 10 cities account for nearly 50 per cent of AI users, despite representing less than 10 per cent of the country's population.

Delhi NCR recorded the highest penetration of ChatGPT users. Other major hubs with strong AI adoption include Bengaluru, Hyderabad, and Chennai.

The report noted that while India has strong AI capabilities, these advantages are clustered in a limited number of urban hubs.

Beyond these cities, emerging use cases are increasingly visible in sectors such as education and healthcare, demonstrating AI's growing role in everyday applications.

Significant disparities persist in advanced usage. Data analysis usage is up to 30 times higher in leading cities compared to lagging regions, while coding usage is four times higher and Codex developer usage nine times higher, underlining the widening intra-regional digital divide.

Home Loans Dominate Retail Credit; Credit Card, Gold Loans See Surge

NEW DELHI, APRIL 15

Home loans continued to dominate India's retail credit landscape, accounting for 51 per cent of total personal loans in FY2024, according to a report.

While the share has marginally declined from 53.6 per cent in FY2016, home loans remain by far the largest segment in personal lending, highlighting the continued preference for housing finance among Indian households.

A white paper by Client Associates, titled "The New Indian Household Balance Sheet," shows a clear shift in borrowing patterns across categories. Credit card usage has emerged as the fastest-growing segment, with its share nearly doubling from 2.7 per cent in FY2016 to 4.8 per cent in FY2024. The segment recorded a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 25.2 per cent over the past decade.

The share of other personal loans also rose significantly, increasing from 21.2 per cent to 26.3 per cent during the same period. In contrast, education loans declined sharply from 4.9 per cent to 2.2 per cent, indicating a reduced reliance on formal credit for education financing.

Vehicle loans remained relatively stable, moderating slightly from 11 per cent to 10.8 per cent after peaking during the pandemic years. Loans against gold jewellery witnessed a temporary spike after 2020 before stabilising at around 1.9 per cent, reflecting their role as a short-term liquidity option during periods of uncertainty.

Consumer durable loans saw a sharp contraction,



shrinking to just 0.4 per cent of the total retail credit mix.

The report further noted that household borrowings in India have grown at a robust 44.6 per cent CAGR in the post-pandemic period, significantly outpacing the growth in savings.

Overall, personal and retail lending expanded at a CAGR of 17.6 per cent between FY2016 and FY2025—nearly double the pace of nominal GDP growth. As a result, household financial debt rose to 6.2 per cent of GDP in FY2024, compared to a pre-pandemic average of around 4.1 per cent.

This increase in borrowings has led to a decline in net financial savings, which fell from 7.7 per cent to 5.2 per cent of GDP.

Meanwhile, a separate report by TransUnion CIBIL highlighted the rapid growth of gold loans, which have emerged as India's second-largest retail credit product.

Gold loan balances have surged 3.8 times since March 2022, with their share in the retail credit portfolio rising from 5.9 per cent to 11.1 per cent by December 2025, underlining their increasing importance in the country's credit ecosystem.

LIC Launches 'MyLIC' and 'Super Sales Saathi' Apps to Boost Digital Transformation

Mumbai, April 15: Life Insurance Corporation of India (LIC) on Tuesday unveiled two next-generation mobile applications—MyLIC for customers and Super Sales Saathi for intermediaries—marking a significant step in its digital transformation journey.

The apps were launched by Shri M. Nagaraju, Secretary, Department of Financial Services, Ministry of Finance, in the presence of LIC CEO and MD Shri R. Doraiswamy, along with Managing Directors Shri Dinesh Pant, Shri Ratnakar Patnaik, Shri R. Chander, and senior officials in Mumbai.

Designed with a user-first approach, both applications aim to deliver a seamless, secure, and personalised digital experience by leveraging advanced technologies, in-



cluding Artificial Intelligence (AI). The initiative is part of LIC's broader push to modernise operations, enhance customer engagement, and empower its vast network of intermediaries.

The MyLIC app enables policyholders to manage their insurance portfolio efficiently through a single platform. Key features include in-

stant premium payments, real-time tracking of policy benefits, paperless policy loans, online policy updates and revival of lapsed policies, as well as digital onboarding through e-KYC. Customers can also explore and purchase policies directly through the app.

The Super Sales Saathi app, on the other hand, is tailored for LIC's

marketing personnel. It offers digital sales tools, real-time policy tracking, automated follow-up reminders, integrated customer communication, and AI-driven insights for enhancing customer value. The app also provides performance dashboards and digital sales kits to improve productivity and field operations. Both applications are powered by LIC's Digital Innovation and Value Enhancement (DIVE) platform, which seeks to create a fully integrated digital insurance ecosystem. The platform is expected to reduce dependency on physical offices while improving operational efficiency across the country.

Speaking at the launch, Shri M. Nagaraju said LIC's digital ecosystem is evolving into a strategic engagement and distribution platform.

With over 260 million policies, he noted that these apps would play a central role in improving service efficiency and maintaining competitiveness in the life insurance sector.

LIC CEO Shri R. Doraiswamy described the apps as "strategic assets" that will shape customer experience and intermediary performance. He added that continued investment in AI-driven personalisation and ecosystem integration would drive the next phase of growth for the organisation.

The two applications together form a dual-engine model—MyLIC focusing on customer self-service and transparency, and Super Sales Saathi aimed at enhancing intermediary productivity and sales enablement—underscoring LIC's shift towards a digital-first approach.



What if Dark Matter Has Two Forms?

Bold New Hypothesis Could Explain a Cosmic Mystery

A new study suggests that failing to detect dark matter signals in some galaxies may not contradict evidence seen in our own. The absence of a signal may itself carry meaning. That is the central idea of a new study published in the *Journal of Cosmology and Astroparticle Physics (JCAP)*, which proposes a different way to search for dark matter. The research suggests scientists may not need to find identical "clues" everywhere in the universe to understand its nature. The study focuses on a puzzling observation at the center of the Milky Way, where scientists have detected an excess of gamma radiation. One possible explanation is that this signal comes from dark matter particles annihilating each other. However, similar signals have not been clearly detected in other systems such as dwarf galaxies. According to the new work, that absence alone does not rule out a dark matter origin. Instead, dark matter may not be a single type of particle. It could consist of multiple components that behave differently depending on their environment.

The galactic center gamma-ray excess

Dark matter is known to exist and is thought to make up a large portion of the universe, yet it has never been directly observed. Scientists infer its presence from the gravitational effects it has on visible matter, but its true nature remains unknown despite decades of research. Many leading theories describe dark matter as particles. In some models, when two of these particles collide, they annihilate and produce high-energy radiation such as gamma rays. Astronomers search for this radiation as a possible signature. "Right now there seems to be an excess of photons coming from an approximately spherical region sur-

rounding the disk of the Milky Way," explains Gordan Krnjaic, a theoretical physicist at the Fermi National Accelerator Laboratory (Fermilab) in the United States and one of the study's authors. Observations from the Fermi Gamma-ray Space Telescope have revealed this excess, which could be linked to dark matter. However, other explanations remain possible, including emissions from astrophysical sources like pulsars. To test these ideas, scientists look beyond our galaxy. "If certain theories of dark matter are true, we should see it in every galaxy, for example in every dwarf galaxy," explains Krnjaic.

Dwarf galaxies

Dwarf galaxies are small and faint but contain large amounts of dark matter. They also have minimal background noise from stars and other radiation, making them ideal places to search for clear signals. Standard particle-based models generally describe two possibilities for how dark matter annihilates. In the simplest case, the probability of annihilation is constant and does not depend on particle speed. If this is true, a signal seen in the Milky Way should also appear in other dark matter rich systems such as dwarf galaxies. In another scenario, the annihilation rate depends on particle velocity. Because dark matter particles in galaxies move slowly, annihilation would be extremely rare, making any signal very difficult to detect anywhere. Under these assumptions, the lack of a signal in dwarf galaxies makes it harder to link the Milky Way's gamma-ray excess to dark matter. Krnjaic and his colleagues propose a different explanation that could resolve this tension while keeping dark matter as a viable source of the Milky Way signal.

Two different particles

"What we're trying to point out in this paper is that you could have a different kind of environmental dependence, even if the annihilation probability is constant in the center of the galaxy," explains Krnjaic. "Dark matter could straightforwardly be two different particles, and the two different particles need to find each other in order to annihilate." In this model, the likelihood of annihilation depends on how much of each particle type is present. Galaxies like the Milky Way might contain similar amounts of both components, increasing the chances of interaction. In dwarf galaxies, one component could dominate, reducing the likelihood that the two types meet. "In this way, you get very different predictions for the emission," explains

Krnjaic. This approach offers a more flexible alternative to standard models. It allows scientists to explain why gamma rays might be detected in the Milky Way but not in dwarf galaxies, without dismissing dark matter as the source. Future observations from the Fermi Gamma-ray Telescope could help clarify the picture. Current data on dwarf galaxies is still limited. Detecting gamma rays in these systems would suggest a more balanced mix of dark matter components, while continued absence might indicate that one type is less common. However, these interpretations are not definitive and depend on other astrophysical factors, meaning further observations will be needed to test the model more thoroughly.



Amazon to buy satellite firm Globalstar for \$11.57bn in challenge to Musk's Starlink

Amazon said on Tuesday it would acquire a satellite company in an \$11.57bn deal, bolstering its own fledgling space business as it looks to take on Elon Musk-led bigger rival Starlink.

The deal gives Amazon access to Globalstar's network of two dozen satellites, boosting the tech giant's ambitions to challenge SpaceX unit Starlink, which currently has about 10,000 units in orbit. Under the deal, the satellite firm's shareholders can elect to receive either \$90 in cash or 0.3210 shares of Amazon common stock for each share of Globalstar they own, the companies said.

Amazon has been working to ramp up its network by deploying about 3,200 satellites in Earth's low orbit by 2029, with roughly half required to be in place by a July 2026 regulatory deadline. The company currently operates a network of more than 200 satellites and is preparing to roll out its satellite internet services later this year. In contrast, Elon Musk's Starlink - the dominant satellite-based internet service provider - already serves more than 9 million users globally. Louisiana-based Globalstar, popular as the service that powers Apple's "emergency SOS" feature, operates about two dozen satellites in low-Earth orbit. Late last year, it said a new, Ap-

ple-backed network under development would expand that to 54 satellites, including a small number of backups. Globalstar offers voice, data, and asset-tracking services to customers across the enterprise, government and consumer markets. In a parallel move, Amazon and Apple - which has invested about \$1.5bn in Globalstar - have signed an agreement to continue powering the satellite-based safety features, such as Emergency SOS and Find My, for iPhone and Apple Watch users. The acquisition is expected to close next year, subject to regulatory approvals and achievement of specific satellite deployment milestones by Globalstar.

The sun is tearing a huge asteroid to pieces

Searching through millions of meteor observations, scientists spotted a cluster of 282 shooting stars that seemed to emerge from the same point in space. According to the researchers, these pieces of rocky debris are the aftermath of a crumbling asteroid, or rock-comet, that got a little too close to the sun. Now, as our planet sweeps through the rock-comet's cluttered wake, keen stargazers on Earth will be able to spot a brand-new meteor shower lighting up the sky. Meteor showers occur when Earth moves through a cloud of dust and small rocks littering space, which fall into the atmosphere and burn up with a dazzling flash. Earth's latest meteor shower, dubbed M2026-A1, will be visible each year from March 16 to April 7. While it won't be as spectacular as better-known meteor showers, this stunning display gives scientists a unique insight into the doomed rock-comet that created it. Lead author Dr Patrick Shober, from NASA's Johnson Space Centre, wrote in *The Conversation*: "What makes this discovery so exciting is that we are essentially witnessing a hidden asteroid being baked to bits." The sun is tearing a huge asteroid to pieces, leaving a wake of debris that Earth is now passing through. Each day, thousands of tiny space rocks fall to Earth and burn up in the atmosphere to produce glowing meteorites.



As they collide with particles of air at speeds over 15 miles (24 km) per second, their outer layers are instantly vaporised into an electrically charged gas, which glows brightly enough to be seen with the naked eye. In the solar system, the majority of these sand-sized particles are produced by comets or asteroids breaking up into tiny pieces. When an icy comet or rocky asteroid starts to crumble - either due to heating, or a collision with another object - scientists say that it has become 'active'. When astronomers want to track down these active objects, they can either look for the glowing tail that is the tell-tale sign of a comet, or watch for the meteor showers produced by their trail of wreckage. By carefully examining this small cluster of meteors, Dr Shober has managed to reconstruct their origin. What makes this meteor shower so unique is that it appears to originate from a rare type of object known as a

'rock-comet'. Most meteor showers come from comets, which disintegrate as their icy surfaces jump from solid to gas, in a process known as sublimation, as they approach the sun. The wreckage of the rocky asteroid has created a new annual meteor shower which can be seen emerging from the area around Libra and Virgo between March 26 and April 7. **When and where can you see the new meteor shower?** Asteroids can become active when they are torn apart by the gravitational forces of a nearby planet or spin too fast, but they can also act like comets under certain conditions. When a dry, rocky asteroid gets extremely close to the sun or faces extreme forces, it can also start to break up into a dusty wake that glows just like a comet's tail. Dr Shober says: "Based on how these meteors break apart when they hit our atmosphere, we can tell they are moderately

fragile, but tougher than stuff from comets. This finding tells us that intense solar heat is literally cracking the asteroid's surface, baking out trapped gases and causing it to crumble." The asteroid's dramatic self-destruction is a product of its 'extreme orbit', plunging almost five times closer to the sun than Earth does. Dr Shober says that this discovery 'reveals hidden populations of near-Earth asteroids, which is vital information for planetary defence'. However, although the meteor shower is strong evidence, the parent asteroid remains elusive. The chances of spotting the relatively dark and fast-moving object from Earth are slim, but Dr Shober is holding out hopes for NASA's NEO Surveyor mission launching in 2027. He says: "This space telescope, dedicated to planetary defence and the discovery of dark, hazardous, sun-approaching asteroids, will be the ideal tool for searching for the shower's origin."

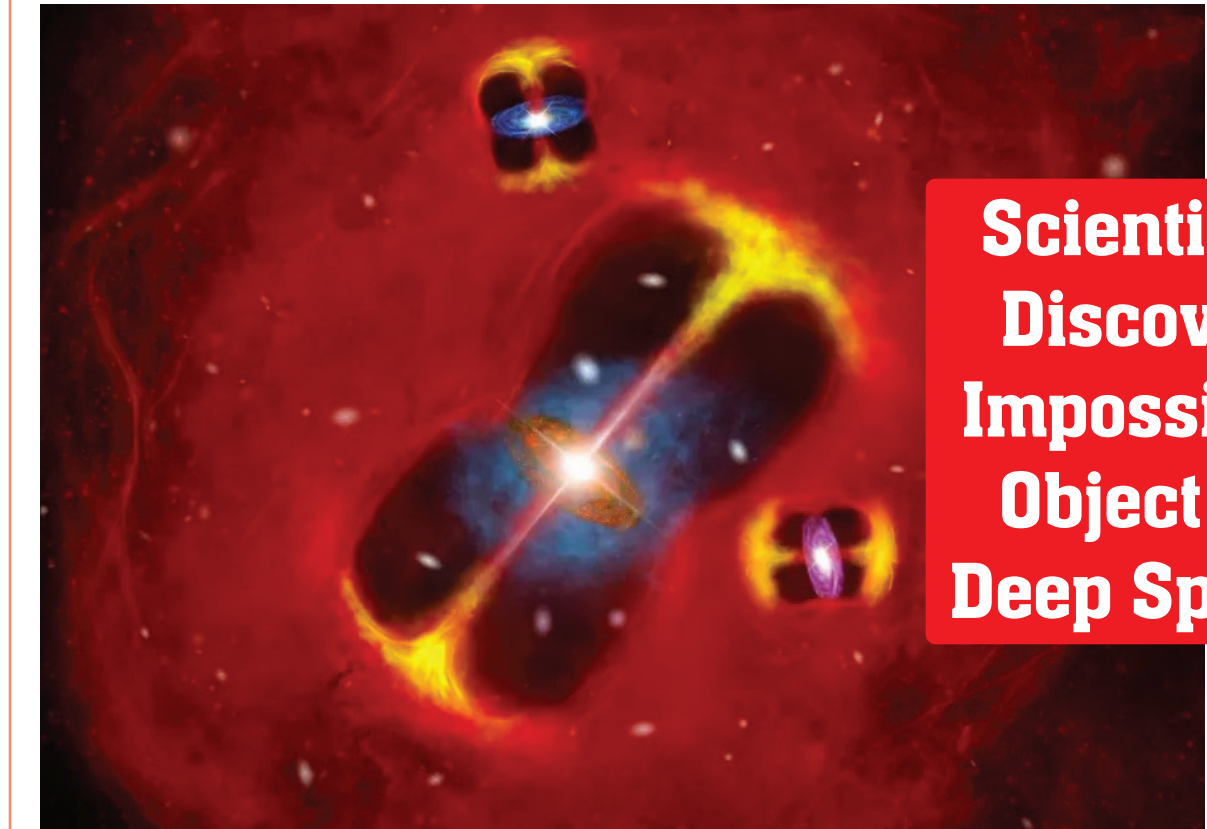
While peering into some of the oldest regions of the known universe - dating back to just 1.4 billion years after the Big Bang - an international team of astronomers made a puzzling discovery.

Scientists Discover Impossible Object in Deep Space

As detailed in a paper published in the journal *Nature*, they discovered an extremely hot galaxy cluster that's far hotter and older than current theories allow. In other words, the discovered cluster is, under our current best understanding of cosmology, impossible - which could upend our current understanding of how the early universe evolved. "We didn't expect to see such a hot cluster atmosphere so early in cosmic history," said lead author and University of British Columbia PhD candidate Dazhi Zhou in a statement about the finding. "In fact, at first I was skeptical about the signal as it was too strong to be real," he added. "But after months of verification,

we've confirmed this gas is at least five times hotter than predicted, and even hotter and more energetic than what we find in many present-day clusters." The astronomers' best theory is that the cluster somehow got a massive head start - previously unimaginable even to top thinkers - thanks to black holes lurking at its core. "This tells us that something in the early universe, likely three recently discovered supermassive black holes in the cluster, were already pumping huge amounts of energy into the surroundings and shaping the young cluster," added coauthor and Dalhousie University professor Scott Chapman, "much earlier and more strongly than we thought." Conventional theories suggest that galaxy clusters gain energy as the gases inside are pulled together and squeezed due to intensifying gravitational forces. The latest research, however, suggests there's more to how these clusters evolve - perhaps even a separate source beyond these gravitational forces. The team found the strange readings when they analyzed observations by the Atacama Large Millimeter/submillimeter Array (ALMA) in the Atacama desert in Chile that examined a "baby" galaxy clus-

ter called SPT2349-56. The cluster, which dates back to around 12 billion years, is huge: its core alone measures around half a million light-years across. That's roughly the size of the halo that circles our own Milky Way galaxy, a vast region that contains globular clusters and older stars - yet it spawns stars more than 5,000 times faster. The astronomers are hoping to figure out what allowed it to get so incredibly hot, a source of energy that defies our current models. The research suggests galaxy clusters evolve in a far more explosive manner than previously thought, aided by gravitational interactions between multiple supermassive black holes. "We want to figure out how the intense star formation, the active black holes and this overheated atmosphere interact, and what it tells us about how present galaxy clusters were built," Zhou explained in the statement. "How can all of this be happening at once in such a young, compact system?" "Understanding galaxy clusters is the key to understanding the biggest galaxies in the universe," Chapman said. "These massive galaxies mostly reside in clusters, and their evolution is heavily shaped by the very strong environment of the clusters as they form, including the intracluster medium."



IPL 2026



Ready to bat up
the order: Naman Dhir



MUMBAI: With former captain Rohit Sharma doubtful for the match against Punjab Kings in the Indian Premier League (IPL) 2026 on Thursday, middle-order batter Naman Dhir has put up his hand to bat up the order if asked by the team management. Dhir, predominantly a finisher who bats lower down the order, has moved up to bat on a few occasions last season when the Mumbai Indians made it to the playoffs, where they lost to Punjab Kings in Qualifier 2. With Rohit Sharma suffering an injury to his right hamstring in the match against the defending champions, Royal Challengers Bengaluru, one of the options available to the team management is promoting someone to open the innings and moving Naman Dhir into the middle-order.

CRICKET

Pacer Rubel Hossain
announces retirement



NEW DELHI: Bangladesh pacer Rubel Hossain has announced his retirement from international cricket, marking the end of a career filled with speed, passion, and memorable moments for Bangladesh. The 36-year-old fast bowler shared his decision in an emotional message on Facebook, reflecting on his journey with the national team. "Playing for the national team has always meant a lot to me. But there comes a time when one has to step away from international cricket. With that in mind, I have decided to say goodbye to international cricket," Rubel wrote on Facebook, signaling the end of his international career. Although he is leaving the global stage, Rubel made it clear that he will stay involved with the sport.

GOLF

Baisoya ready for battle
with Bhullar and Kochhar



JOHANNESBURG: One of India's most successful professionals, Gaganjeet Bhullar, an 11-time Asian Tour winner, will take on last week's winner, Sachin Baisoya, as the AM Green IGPL action shifts to South Africa. The venue this week is the legacy-laden Royal Johannesburg Golf Club, long considered as one of the finest in Africa and the world. The AM Green IGPL Invitational South Africa is the second event in the African leg and the third overall in a schedule of 15 events planned for the 2026 season. The players will compete at the Par-72 Royal Johannesburg West Course. The Royal Johannesburg has in the past hosted the National Open of South Africa and the famous Joburg Open.

IPL 2026: Virat Kohli's 49 powers RCB to comfortable win against LSG

BENGALURU

Impact player Virat Kohli top scored with 49 runs as Royal Challengers Bengaluru (RCB) chased down a small target of 147 runs in just 15.1 overs while losing five wickets against Lucknow Super Giants in the 23rd match of the Indian Premier League (IPL) 2026 played at the M.Chinnaswamy Stadium on Wednesday.

With this win, RCB are back at the top of the points table with 8 points in five games.

Chasing a modest target, Royal Challengers Bengaluru got off to a slow start, managing just six runs in the opening over. Phil Salt, who survived a close run-out chance on the final ball of the first over, attempted to accelerate but was clean bowled by Prince Yadav in the following over for 7 off 8 balls.

Virat Kohli then shifted gears, breaking the shackles with three consecutive boundaries off Mohammed Shami, who had earlier bowled a tight opening over. Kohli continued his aggressive approach, smashing four boundaries in the next over against Prince Yadav to put the opposition under pressure. His attacking intent helped RCB race to 60/1 at the end of the powerplay, with Kohli contributing 40 off just 20 balls.

With Rishabh Pant unavailable after sustaining an elbow injury in the first innings, Nicholas Pooran led Lucknow Super Giants on the field. Despite being sloppy in the field, LSG managed a breakthrough in the eighth over when Avesh Khan dismissed Devdutt Padikkal for 10.

Kohli continued to anchor the innings, rotating the strike effectively, while Rajat Patidar played the aggressor's role. However, Kohli fell just short of a half-century, getting caught at long-on for 49 off 34 balls in the 13th over, an innings that included six fours and a six.

Following his dismissal, Patidar and Jitesh Sharma accelerated the scoring. Jitesh struck two sixes and two fours in a single over, while Patidar added a quick 27 off 13 balls before both fell in quick succession to Prince Yadav.

In the end, Tim David and Romario Shepherd remained unbeaten on 14 each, guiding RCB to victory with 29 balls to spare. Avesh Khan chipped in with two important wickets for LSG.

Prince was the most successful



bowler for LSG as he finished with good figures of 3-32. While Avesh Khan also took two crucial wickets. Earlier, asked to bat first, LSG struggled to get going as openers Mitchell Marsh and Aiden Markram found it tough against the tight new-ball spell from Bhuvneshwar Kumar and Josh Hazlewood, reaching just 14/0 after two overs. Marsh briefly shifted momentum with a towering six, but Markram departed for 12 after mistiming a slower ball from Rasikh.

LSG suffered a significant setback when captain Rishabh Pant injured his elbow and retired hurt after facing only three deliveries. Nicholas Pooran failed to capitalise on the opportunity, falling

cheaply to Hazlewood. Marsh then stitched a quick 36-run stand with Ayush Badoni before being bowled by Krunal Pandya for 40. Krunal struck again to remove Abdul Samad for a duck, further denting LSG's innings. Badoni (38) and Mukul Choudhary (39) attempted to rebuild with a steady partnership, but regular wickets kept halting LSG's progress. Pant returned later but could only manage one run.

Rasikh wrapped up the innings efficiently, finishing with four wickets, while Bhuvneshwar claimed three and Hazlewood maintained excellent control. Their collective effort ensured RCB restricted LSG to a modest total.



RCB's new-ball pair of Bhuvneshwar Kumar and Josh Hazlewood once again set the tone with disciplined spells, and Patidar highlighted the value of having experienced bowlers in a T20 setup.

"Of course, for a captain, if you have specialist bowlers in T20 leagues, it makes the job easier because you don't have to tell them what to do next. The experience and ideas are helping all the other bowlers as well."

He also credited the team's improved fielding standards, which have been a focus area throughout the tournament.

"The team has been working on fielding intensity since the start of the IPL. That was followed by Phil Salt, and he usually takes those one-handed and flying catches. It was a great catch for him."

Despite RCB's strong start to the season and their return to the top of the table, Patidar remained grounded about their title prospects.

"No, it's a long way to go on the title hopes. Right now, we are just looking one game at a time."

With this win, RCB are back at the top of the points table with 8 points in five games. They will now face the Delhi Capitals (DC) at the same venue on Saturday.

'It was fantastic': Patidar hails RCB bowlers

Skipper Rajat Patidar lauded his bowling unit and fielding effort after Royal Challengers Bengaluru (RCB) secured a convincing five-wicket win over Lucknow Super Giants (LSG) in Match 23 of the Indian Premier League 2026 at the M. Chinnaswamy Stadium on Wednesday.

RCB produced a clinical all-round performance, first restricting LSG to 146 and then chasing down the target comfortably in 15.1 overs to climb to the top of the points table.

Reflecting on the bowling performance, Patidar was full of praise for his attack.

"It was fantastic on the bowl-

R Vaishali wins FIDE Women's Candidates, to face Ju Wenjun for World Championship title

CYPRUS

India's R Vaishali on Wednesday won the FIDE Women's Candidates Tournament 2026, earning her the chance to compete for the World Championship against Ju Wenjun later this year.

The 24-year-old secured her win in dramatic style, defeating Kateryna Lagno 8.5/14 in the final round with white pieces.

She played calmly and effectively, finishing half a point ahead of the competition. This victory marked an incredible turnaround; she had started the tournament as one of the lowest-rated players.

Vaishali's journey mirrored D Gukesh's fairytale run in 2024, when he also overcame the odds to win the Candidates.

After finishing joint-second in 2024 with 7.5 points, Vaishali improved by one point this time, claiming the top prize.

In her decisive game, Vaishali maintained her composure. Her opening strategy worked flawlessly, giving her an early advantage that she methodically turned into a win. With a pawn lead, she played the middlegame with great accuracy and executed several crucial

moves around the second time control. Each move required careful precision to preserve her lead, and any mistake could have allowed her opponent to catch up. However, Vaishali stayed focused and finished the game nearly flawlessly.

Although her win was critical, she needed some favorable results to secure her victory. Fellow Indian player Divya



Deshmukh played a key role by drawing against Bibisara Assaubayeva.

Since Assaubayeva started the round with the same number of points as Vaishali, this draw ensured Vaishali's win was decisive.

Vaishali's triumph is even more remarkable considering how close she came to not participating. After a tough performance at the Chennai

Grand Masters last August, where she scored only 1.5 points, she thought about skipping the Grand Swiss.

Even after scoring just half a point in her last two games before the final round, Vaishali stepped up on the biggest stage. Key moments earlier in the tournament, especially her games against Tan Zhongyi, also played a vital role in her success.

'Excited to enter the real world': Jamie Murray bids farewell to professional tennis

LONDON

Former doubles World No. 1 Jamie Murray has officially brought the curtain down on his professional tennis career, confirming his retirement through a heartfelt message on social media on Wednesday.

"My tennis journey comes to an end after 36 years. I feel very fortunate and privileged for all the amazing experiences this great sport has given me," Murray wrote on Instagram.

The former World No. 1 in the PIF ATP Doubles Rankings enjoyed a distinguished career spanning two decades at the highest level. He claimed 34 tour-level doubles titles, including multiple major honours, and made history as the first British player to reach the top of the doubles rankings.

Murray also paid tribute to those closest to him, including his brother Andy Murray, who was a constant presence throughout his journey. "Thanks Mum, Dad, Andy, Ale, Alan, Louis, and Thomas for all your incredible support, efforts, and sacrifices," he wrote.

The 40-year-old played his final professional match at the US Open in 2025, where he partnered with Ivan Dodig. His career began with a breakthrough ATP title in San Jose in 2007 alongside Eric Butorac, and from that point forward, he estab-



lished himself as one of the most consistent doubles players on tour, winning at least one title in 16 of 18 seasons between 2007 and 2024.

Beyond his individual success, Murray formed a memorable partnership with his younger brother Andy. The duo played a pivotal role in Great Britain's historic triumph at the Davis Cup 2015, ending a 79-year wait for the title.

Reflecting on his journey, Murray expressed contentment with what he had achieved. "I played for 20 years at the top level and feel privileged for what I was able to do and experience on the court. I don't have any regrets," he said.

As he steps away from the sport, Murray hinted at a new chapter ahead. "For everybody else who's helped and supported me, I appreciate all of you. Excited to enter the real world."

'India committed to clean sport': Mandaviya after meeting WADA chief

NEW DELHI

Union Sports Minister Mansukh Mandaviya on Wednesday underscored the country's growing emphasis on clean sport and stronger anti-doping mechanisms following his meeting with Witold Banka, President of the World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA).

"Had an excellent meeting with Mr Witold Banka, President of the World Anti-Doping Agency, in New Delhi today," Mandaviya wrote on X, sharing details of the meeting.

He reiterated India's commitment towards clean sport, adding, "Under the leadership of PM Shri Narendra Modi ji, India is committed to fostering a strong culture of clean sport, where the true spirit of competition is safe-

guarded."

Banka highlighted the importance of continued collaboration, noting that discussions focused on advancing anti-doping efforts in India and ensuring effective implementation aligned with global standards.

"Pleased to meet with Dr Mansukh Mandaviya, Minister of Youth Affairs and Sports and Minister of Labour and Employment of India. We discussed advancing anti-doping efforts and strengthening the integrity of sport in India, including the importance of sustained progress and effective implementation in line with global standards," he said in a post on X.

WADA chief earlier met senior officials of India's premier investigative agency, the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI), as

part of efforts to enhance cooperation in tackling doping-related offences.

"An important meeting with Mr Manoj Sasidhar, Special Director of the Central Bureau of Investigation, in Delhi. As part of the Global Anti-Doping Intelligence and Investigations Network, we emphasised close cooperation with law enforcement to tackle organised doping and the criminal networks behind it," Banka wrote on X.

India emerged as one of the most concerning cases in global anti-doping data last year, ranking second in a decade-long study conducted by the World Anti-Doping Agency. The country also recorded the highest number of doping violations for the third year in a row. With a positivity rate of 3.6 per cent,

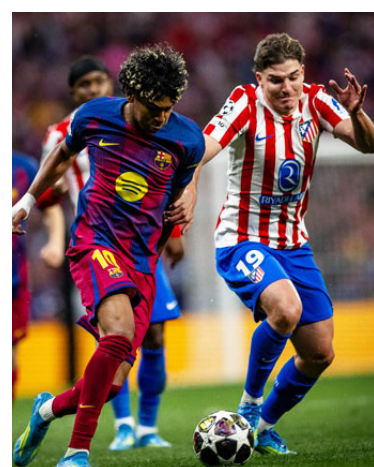
'Refereeing was a disgrace': Laporta slams officials after Barcelona Champions League exit

BARCELONA

FC Barcelona president Joan Laporta launches a scathing attack on referee Clement Turpin following his side's UEFA Champions League quarterfinal elimination against Atletico Madrid.

Despite securing a 2-1 win on the night, Barcelona exits the competition with a 3-2 aggregate defeat, with Laporta attributing part of the loss to what he describes as poor officiating during Tuesday's clash at the Metropolitan Stadium.

"I congratulate Atletico Madrid on reaching the semifinals, but that does not excuse the fact that yesterday's refereeing, along with VAR, was a disgrace, it's intolerable," Laporta told the press at the Conde de Godo tennis tournament in Barcelona on Wednesday, as quoted by Xinhua.



Laporta expressed frustration over several key decisions, pointing out that Atletico committed 15 fouls without receiving a single booking, while Bar-

celona was reduced to 10 men for the second time in the tie. Eric Garcia was sent off for a challenge on Alexander Sorloth, with the referee ruling him as the last defender.

The Barcelona president also revisits incidents from the first leg, where Pau Cubarsi was dismissed before halftime following a foul on Giuliano Simeone. "In the first leg, we were denied a clear penalty, and one of our players was sent off when it should have been a yellow card. Giuliano didn't have the ball under control. The referee got it right initially, but VAR intervened and changed the decision," Laporta said.

Laporta further criticised the red card shown to Garcia, arguing that Jules Kounde could have covered the situation, meaning Garcia was not the last man. He also questions an offside

decision that ruled out a goal by Ferran Torres, as well as a potential penalty claim involving Dani Olmo. Another contentious moment sees Fermin Lopez require medical treatment after being struck by the studs of goalkeeper Juan Musso while attempting a header.

"Ferran's goal was a goal. The penalty on Olmo was a penalty. The incident on Fermin, judge it as you wish, but it's unacceptable to see a young player suffer like that while being stretched up on the pitch," Laporta concluded.

With this loss, Barcelona's 11-year wait to lift the Champions Trophy continues, while on the other side Atletico Madrid has qualified for the semi-finals and would look to end their quest for their first Champions League title. Madrid has reached the finals three times, but finished as runners-up on every occasion.

If I like the content, I'll play any character: Rajasekhar

The Film Critics Association felicitated veteran actor Dr. Rajasekhar for his performance in his comeback film *Biker*, which released on April 3. The event was attended by senior journalists and association members, who presented him with a bouquet and a felicitation certificate in recognition of his contribution to cinema. Association honorary president Prabhu, president J.V. Battula Prasad Rao, secretary Suresh Kondeti, and treasurer Bharadwaj were present at the ceremony.



Industry recalls Rajasekhar's journey
Speaking at the event, senior journalist Prabhu praised Rajasekhar's career, citing impactful performances in films such as *Ankusham* and *Aagraham*. He noted that the actor's rapport with the media has remained strong over the years and added that recognition from critics holds special value, even for stalwarts like Akkineni Nageswara Rao.

Other speakers recalled his humility and consistency, stating that despite delivering several hits, his attitude has remained unchanged. His ability to handle action-driven roles and connect with audiences was widely appreciated.

Senior journalist Bala Reddy highlighted that Rajasekhar was the first hero to attend a "Meet the Press" event organized by the Critics Association, while others pointed to his long-standing association with journalists and media support.

Jeevitha Rajasekhar on media and second innings

Actor-producer Jeevitha Rajasekhar addressed the gathering, describing the media fraternity as a close-knit circle and expressing concern over misinformation in the age of social media. She said Rajasekhar continues to wait for meaning-

ful roles despite receiving multiple offers, adding that the team prioritizes strong content over quantity. She also emphasized the family's close bond with the media.

Rajasekhar on comeback and future projects

Speaking about *Biker*, Rajasekhar said the film's release on April 3 brought him encouraging responses from audiences and that he values recognition from critics more than conventional awards. "I did *Biker* because I believed in the story. I had no specific expectations, but the response has been positive," he said.

Reflecting on his career, he noted that both *Ankusham* and *Magadu* were milestones following difficult phases in his life, adding that his recent success has been personally significant.

Open to all roles, says actor

During the Q&A session, Rajasekhar stated that he is open to experimenting with different roles, including negative characters and father roles, depending on the strength of the script.

"I can do any role if the story is good. Playing a hero is actually more challenging because of audience expectations," he said.

He also confirmed upcoming collaborations with director Pavan Sadineni and another project involving the son of filmmaker I.V. Sasi, with titles yet to be finalized.

On a lighter note, he recalled his past biking experiences and humorously shared anecdotes from his younger days.

Industry support continues

The event concluded with remarks from secretary Suresh Kondeti, who thanked all attendees for their participation and support in honoring the actor.

Can Sara Arjun Silence Trolls Once More With Dhanush?

The buzz around Sara Arjun continues to grow as the young actress finds herself at the center of yet another high-profile casting discussion. After making headlines for her performance opposite Ranveer Singh in the *Dhurandhar* franchise, Sara is now reportedly set to star alongside Dhanush in his upcoming film, tentatively titled *D56*. The news has sparked significant debate, primarily due to the noticeable age gap between the two actors. Dhanush, one of the most established stars in Tamil cinema, is in his 40s, while Sara is just around 20, creating a gap of over two decades. This has once again triggered conversations in Kollywood about casting dynamics and on-screen pairings.

Interestingly, this isn't the first time Sara has faced such scrutiny. During *Dhurandhar*, similar discussions arose due to her pairing with Ranveer Singh. However, she managed to silence critics and trolls with her performance, proving that talent can often outweigh preconceived notions. The film's success further helped normalize the pairing among audiences.

Now, the big question remains, can she repeat the same feat with Dhanush? While the debate continues, industry insiders believe that if the script justifies the pairing and Sara delivers yet another strong performance, the noise around the age gap could fade once again.

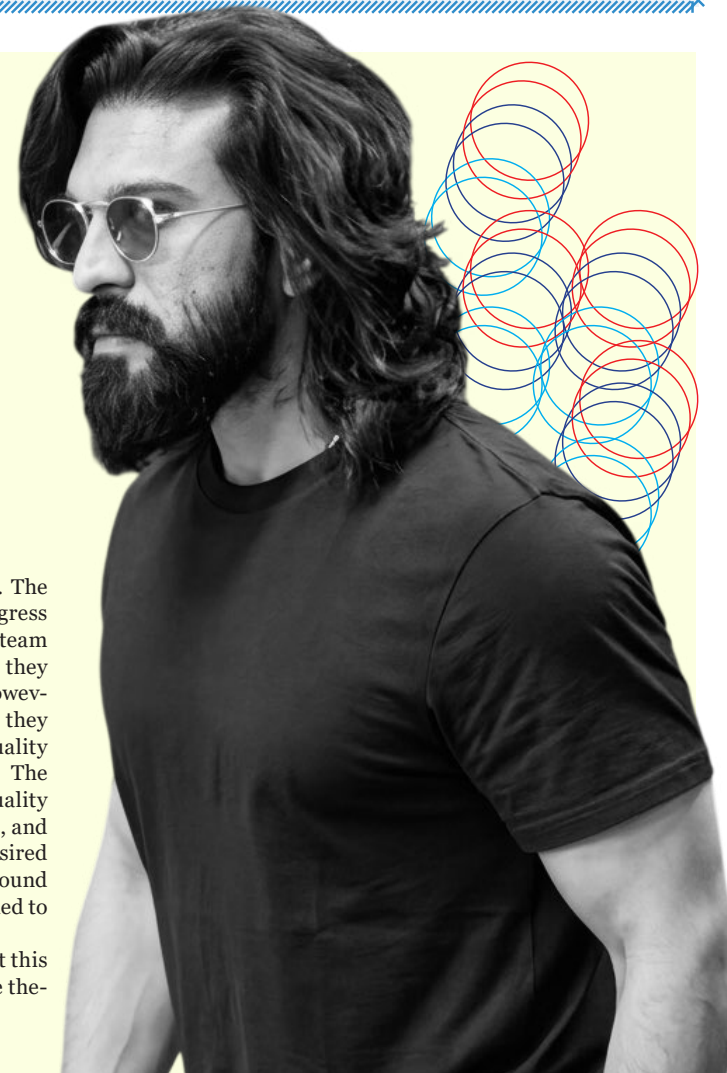
For Sara Arjun, *D56* could be another crucial step in her evolving career, one that might redefine how audiences perceive unconventional casting choices. Let's see what happens.

Peddi's Official Clarification On Postponement

It is known that Mega Power Star Ram Charan's much-awaited pan-India film *Peddi*, directed by Buchi Babu Sana and produced by Venkata Satish Kilaru of Vriddhi Cinemas, has completed its talkie portions, with only a special song left to be shot before wrapping up the entire production. Meanwhile, post-production work is progressing simultaneously. The makers have now released an official update regarding the film's release date. *Peddi* will not arrive on April 30th as initially planned; in-

stead, the release has been pushed to June. The exact date will be finalized based on the progress of post-production. In their statement, the team revealed that after watching the rushes, they were extremely pleased with the output. However, given the strong potential of the content, they want to ensure that the post-production quality fully complements the film's creative vision. The makers emphasized that delivering a high-quality cinematic experience requires time, patience, and meticulous workmanship. To achieve the desired level of finesse, especially in visual effects, sound design, and overall finishing, they have decided to postpone the release to June.

Fans and movie lovers are urged to support this decision, as it ultimately aims to enhance the theatrical experience.



Anil Ravipudi Film Bags Fancy OTT Price Even Before Shoot Begins

Director Anil Ravipudi is once again proving his strong brand value in Telugu cinema. Even before the shooting of his new film begins, the project has already created huge excitement among fans and trade circles. This upcoming movie brings together Venkatesh Daggubati and Nandamuri Kalyan Ram in lead roles. This combination itself is very special as both actors have strong fan bases. A multistarer like this always creates high expectations and with Anil Ravipudi directing it, the buzz has gone to another level. One of the biggest highlights is that the OTT deal has already been closed even before the film officially starts shooting. Popular streaming platform ZEE5 has reportedly acquired the digital rights for a fancy price. This clearly shows the confidence that digital platforms have in Anil Ravipudi's films.

His previous movies have performed very well both in theatres and on OTT.

The film is expected to go on floors in the last week of June 2026 in Hyderabad. The makers are planning to complete the shooting in three major schedules. Currently, pre-production work is happening at a fast pace, including casting and technical planning.

Another exciting update is that the film is targeting a grand release during the Sankranti festival. Sankranti is one of the biggest seasons for Telugu cinema and releasing during this time can bring huge box office success. Anil Ravipudi is already known for delivering entertaining family films, which suit the festive mood perfectly.

Interestingly, this will be the fifth collaboration between Anil Ravipudi and Venkatesh. Their previous films have all been successful. At the same time, Ravipudi is also teaming up again with Kalyan Ram after their earlier hit film.

Sujeeth's Master Plan - Will Pawan Approve?

Though there is no clarity whether hero Nani will be able to wrap his complete work on "The Paradise" by the first week of August, as the release date is set towards that fag end of that month, it looks like another director is planning big later. He's none other than the craftsman of #OG with Pawan Kalyan in the lead, Sujeeth, and he's now supposed to direct "Bloody Romeo" with Nani in the lead. But that's not the point here. Apparently, Sujeeth is planning to wrap the whole of "Bloody Romeo" shoot with Nani in under 6 months. As most of the film's shooting will happen in London, United Kingdom, the plan is that they are going to wrap the majority of the shooting in a single schedule. Sujeeth's idea is that, after wrapping "Bloody Romeo", he will do a sequel of #OG with Pawan Kalyan, and that film will be produced by Pawan Kalyan Creative Works and People Media Factory together. And this sequel shoot might start in 2027 itself. How far could this happen realistically? People close to Pawan Kalyan have revealed that nothing is concrete in this, though Sujeeth has proposed about #OG2 long back. Also, moving a project from DVV Danayya and doing the sequel with another production house will also affect Pawan Kalyan's image badly. Only if Pawan Kalyan approves the project, then Sujeeth might get lucky to do this sequel. Else, he will have to wrap *Bloody Romeo* first and wait for Pawan Kalyan's nod. Let's wait for the final updates.

